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CONTEXTUAL LEADERSHIP WITHIN
CHIN IMMIGRANT CHURCHES IN THE UNITED STATES

by

BAWI BIK THAWNG

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of

Luther Seminary

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ABSTRACT

Contextual Leadership within Chin Immigrant Churches in the United States

by

Bawi Bik Thawng

This research explores the leadership practices of Chin immigrant congregations in the United States, focusing on how they can develop a more effective leadership practice in dealing with the new context of the new land. It attempts to answer the question: What kind of leadership practice will help Chin immigrant leaders apply adaptive leadership theory for implementing contextual oriented leadership theory for the church? The initial motivation for this research arose out of the researcher's interest in the perception of Chin immigrant congregations on the issue of leadership. A qualitative case study research method was employed in this research.

The research result indicates that the context of the immigrant churches in America challenges the traditional practices of leadership in Myanmar. It also challenges the total validity of western theories and methods of leadership when applied to different people with different cultures. Myanmar immigrant church leaders and ministers need to re-evaluate their understanding of leadership practice within the context of the immigrants they serve. At the same time, they should reconsider women's participation in the church's leadership role and let young people with contextual understanding of the new land participate in the leadership role for effective ministry to the immigrants in the US.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BBC: Bethel Baptist Church, a pseudonym for the research site.

CBC: Chin Baptist Church.

CBC USA: Chin Baptist Churches of the United States of America.

CCF: Chin Christian Fellowship.

DCCF: Dallas Chin Christian Fellowship.

GTE: Graduate Theological Education.

IRB: Institutional Review Board.

MCC: The Myanmar Council of Churches in Myanmar.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND RESEARCH QUESTION

Sustainability is a growing concern for many churches in the United States. According to a Gallup article, church membership has declined sharply in the past two decades. Between 1947 and 1976, U.S. church membership was reported to be around 70% or higher. In 2018 that percentage decreased a significant 20% and is now at 50%. The decrease in church membership has led to the closure of many churches.¹ To prevent further closure or decrease in membership, many churches are seeking strategies for sustainability. The concern and discussion on sustainability of churches often fails to include the status and concerns of immigrant churches.

Moreover, there seems to be a perception that immigrant churches are thriving due to their high membership rate. Contrary to this popular perception, immigrant churches have their own unique challenges and concerns. Generational gaps, language barriers, and cultural differences are issues often discussed by immigrant church leaders as factors that could lead to decrease in church membership among its 1.5 and second-

¹ Jeffrey M. Jones, *U.S. Church Membership Down Sharply in Past Two Decades*, accessed March 20, 2020, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/248837/church-membership-down-sharply-past-two-decades.aspx>.

generation immigrant members. Thus, sustainability is indeed an issue of concern for many immigrant churches in the United States.

There are many factors that are essential for a church to sustain itself. One of the biggest factors is leadership. This is also true for secular institutions. Leadership is crucial for the success of the church because it is ultimately how the church engages with the community. Leadership sets the culture of the church. There are many different types of leadership. Different churches will need different forms of leadership due to each church's unique identity and issues within its congregation. Thus, it is imperative to explore what exactly makes immigrant churches different from non-immigrant churches. What are issues impacting immigrant churches? What type of leadership model is culturally sensitive and most appropriate to ensure effectiveness and sustainability? These are the important questions immigrant church leaders will have to ask themselves and seek answers for the sake of their church longevity.

Brief Historical Background of the Research Site

Over the past two decades there has been a significant increase in the establishment of Chin Churches in the United States. Chin people are an ethnic minority in Myanmar. Many Chin people resettled in the United States as refugees and asylees. What has been interesting about the establishment of Chin churches is how rapidly they were able to form so many churches within a short period of time. For example, by 2019 there were more than ten Chin churches in Indianapolis, Indiana alone. Likewise, Dallas, Texas, has multiple Chin Churches. All the Chin churches in Dallas originated from the

Dallas Chin Christian Fellowship (DCCF), founded in January 1999.² The fellowship had about fifty members when they worshiped biweekly.

By May of 1999, DCCF was able to host regular worship every Sunday evening and finally established Bethany Chin Baptist Church (BCBC), Dallas on July 18, 1999. As more Chin refugees from countries like Malaysia, India, and Myanmar resettled in the United States establishing their own churches, the membership of the church continues to increase, becoming somewhat of a megachurch among the Chin community. At one point the church's membership reached as high as 1,000 members.

Despite the increase in membership, the church began to experience some tension and conflict between its members and leadership. Prior to joining this church, many of its members belonged to different denominations, and even within the same denomination some of the doctrines were very different from BCBC. Consequently, this became the beginning of a division within the church. Slowly, BCBC witnessed its members leaving their church and forming their own churches with like-minded individuals. People who belonged to the Baptist denomination founded other Baptist churches and a few others formed other denomination churches as well. By 2019, Dallas had over ten Chin churches.³

² The 15th Anniversary Magazine of Bethany Baptist Church (a pseudonym), Dallas, Texas (March 15, 2014), 8.

³ Ibid., 29.

Bethlehem Baptist Church (BBC) is one of the churches that branched off from BCBC. It was founded by a few members of the BCBC ten years ago with a membership that exceeded over two hundred members. All of the members consisted of Chin refugees who had previously lived in countries including Malaysia, India, and Guam. This church has been selected as the research site for this paper. I have been serving there as a volunteer pastor since March of 2017 and it became my practical study field for my DMIN studies. The membership of the church has grown significantly since it was founded. It went from two hundred members to about seven hundred members in 2019. For worship services they used Hakha, which is one of the Chin ethnic group dialects. The church has one main Sunday evening worship service and three other fellowship worship services throughout the week: women's Fellowship worship service twice a month, youth fellowship worship service every Saturday evening, and a weekly Wednesday night home cell worship service for all members. Women's Fellowship worship service mainly focuses on consolation worship service to the bereaved people or family at their respective homes and also participating in the thanksgiving service invited by the family.

BBC tradition is rooted in its origin from the Baptist doctrine, belief, and practices that it took along from their mother country, Myanmar. The American Baptist missionaries brought the Gospel to the Myanmar people, especially to the Chins, and established Baptist churches. The Baptist beliefs and practices that were brought to Myanmar are coming back again to the US through this congregation. Therefore, this local church shares a subset of Baptist ecclesiology and its focus is missional minded

ecclesiology. It has twelve deacons, twelve youth fellowship leaders, and twelve women fellowship leaders. It also formed other committees such as mission, church school, building and property, music, culture, and audio visual.

Research Questions

As immigrant churches in the new land, most of them are struggling with their adjustment to new social systems, professions, and dominant lifestyles in the U.S. Most parents belonging to the churches work at different factories and companies. Since they are very busy working for their living, they do not have enough time to spend with their children who are spending most of their time at schools. Each family faces the challenge of life in the US: paying regular billing, food choices, technological impact, way of living: individual vs. community mindset, and more. It is clear that there are gaps between the parents or older people and the children. While their children are ready to accept the American culture, its way of life and context, the parents are reluctant and not ready due to many difficulties and challenges that are hindering them. They are also facing a great challenge at home because many of their children are no longer able to speak the Chin language and are speaking mainly in English. In order to solve this challenge, the church organizes Chin language learning programs for the young people in the church. These programs are typically run during the summer season, some for about a week, and some who run the program for a month or so. We have great hope that the church will be able to bridge this generation gap among the Chin community and build a healthy and harmonious living among themselves and with the larger society. The church becomes one of the best places where the Chin immigrants find their guidance and

solutions for their daily challenges, a center for gathering the older people and the young people where they can share their interests, passions, and burdens together.

As immigrants in a new and foreign land, they find it difficult to adapt in many areas of their lives, like church leadership and administration. There are pastors who are educated, well-trained, and experienced in church leadership while in Myanmar. However, they are not well-equipped to lead Chin churches in the United States as the new land is full of new experiences with different challenges. They find countless challenges to adapt effective leadership practice in their daily leadership role. Even a well-trained local American church leader who had experiences in the US context may be unqualified to lead the Chin churches because they have differences in context, world view, and experiences. A congregation that has established in the new land needs leaders who know the context and know how to contextualize their leadership according to the new context. A research question emerges out of this context: *How might contextual leadership develop within Chin immigrant churches in the United States?*

This study will measure the effects of doing ground-based case study research on the leadership style of the congregation through the results emerging from the research protocols and survey. The purpose is to help leaders see the contexts through each of the focus group and the results of the survey in a different way and actively engage with leadership based on the context of the church. The leaders begin to understand their leadership style, that based on the context and lives that lead the entire congregation actively participate in the ministry of God. As a result, leaders may be able to organize some leadership trainings based on the contexts that leaders' engagement in ministry and

understand their leadership style as participation in God's ministry based on the contexts of the people.

This training will include participation of leaders in the ongoing process of leadership training and seminars offered by the church and how the leaders or pastors of the church cultivate their leadership according to the context of the land and the people. In this training, the church will continue to offer leadership training based on the context that includes solid biblical foundation, which may have an impact on members having a basic understanding of contextual congregational leadership. The overall leadership method or style of leadership among Chin churches in the US is influenced by the dictatorial leadership used by the military government from their home country, Myanmar. The leadership style that they are applying to pursue the context may still have top-down leadership, which will undoubtedly have an impact on the church leaders' ability to lead as effectively as they should. We see that most leaders are unintentionally influenced by the leadership style they took from their country, which impacts their leadership, which I will document in the instruments as intervening variables.

Statement of Problem and Importance of the Research

As stated above in the introduction of this research, Chin people came from Myanmar, where the military dictator ruled its people under authoritative leadership. When the Chin people migrated into America, they also brought dictatorial leadership, culture, and traditions of the Burmese along with them. In the Burmese family, the father is regarded as supreme controller (god of the household), meaning the

father has supreme authority over all the family affairs and becomes the decision maker of the whole family. Children seldom have the right to choose their future in the family. For example, children are seldom allowed to choose their college subject to study. The father used to decide what subject should be studied for the children in the college. This tradition impacted the relationships between the elders, youth, and children in communities when they resettled in the U.S. Furthermore, many of the children in the community have lost some of their roots to the culture and traditions. Due to this, it has caused gaps between the Chin parents and their children.

The parents are deeply focused on the movement and old traditional heritage, which separate them from their children's lives. By observing the BBC and the Chin immigrants in the US, it is quite clear that when parents try to address problems, they have no idea and method to understand and influence their children. Besides, parents are not equipped to discuss with teachers, pastors, and leaders regarding parenting challenges. Many of the youth have adapted to the American lifestyle, while the elders hold on to their native lifestyles which is causing large gaps every day. A clear example of this would be that the children in the community can no longer speak or write in the Chin language. Leaders of the congregations become the only responsible agents for building bridges between this gap.

Moreover, when I began to study in the DMin course at Luther Seminary specializing in congregational leadership, I shifted my practical study field to Bethlehem Baptist church, one of the Chin churches from Dallas; then I came to see the weaknesses of church leaders to contextualize their leadership practice in the new land. They are

trying to apply the leadership practice that they copied from their homeland, Myanmar. They applied the old-fashioned way of leadership practice that was adopted in Chin land, which is out of context for the new land and context. There are almost two Chin churches in every city where the Chin people live. For example, there are more than ten Chin churches in the city of Dallas, Texas and Indianapolis, Indiana. The main reason why Chin Churches are facing separation or splitting of churches depends on the impact of the leadership style that they are practicing in the church's leadership today.

Power abuse and top-down leadership styles, which they have copied from their home country, also became another impact of failure in leadership and membership decline in the church. Most church leaders, including lay leaders, are still sticking to the authoritative leadership style that they copied from the military leaders of their homeland, Myanmar. For example, instead of listening to members, pastors and leaders often used to lead with their own interest that failed to link with the context. They think they know what is best for the church and fail to listen to other peoples' concerns or ideas, which leads them to neglect spiritual intervention in the conversation. In this situation, especially among Chin churches in the US, the response to case study research and appreciative inquiry research will likely point toward a potential for its future viability or hopeful future.

Chin churches in the US are challenged to engage in adaptive leadership experiments within their new social context and cultural environment. Discovering such new leadership practices and adaptive leadership experiments may not be an easy task, but it requires change and adjustment in many ways. Therefore, this research becomes

important not only for me, and BBC, but also to Chin immigrant churches in the US. Because of the demand and importance of cultivating contextual leadership for Chin churches in the US, there are other questions that relate to my research question that this research will attempt to address. How should we apply adaptive leadership theory for implementing contextual oriented leadership theory for the church? Cultural change will be necessary in order for the leaders to adapt to a new situation. To what extent can case study research and appreciative inquiry have an impact on the culture and experiences of the people where churches are facing different issues and challenges in the new land? What are the basic challenges for a particular church's member for leading and building a healthy family among the community and within the church? What role does the Holy Spirit play in this kind of cultural and contextual change in the new land?

Research Methodology

The social science research methodology I utilized to research my question is exploratory case study research, which is based on qualitative data gathering from ground-based research. Robert K. Yin, in his book called *Case Study Research: Design and Method*, briefly defines how useful case study is:

A case study allows investigators to focus in a “case” and retain a holistic and real-world perspective-such as studying individual life cycles, small group behavior(s), organizational and managerial processes, neighborhood changes, school performance, international relations, and the maturation of industries.⁴

⁴ Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Method* 5th ed. (Los-Angelis, CA: SAGE, 2014), 4.

In order to do a case study, a researcher needs to understand “a real-world case” where it is believed that it has important contextual conditions in the community that we should study for uplifting a better life. A researcher explores deeply into the real world and gathers all available data from the community to analyze the case. Exploring in the community through in-depth participation in the real life of the people will help the researcher to define a clear contextual based leadership for the community

Exploratory case study research is my preferred research methodology from a biblical and theological perspective. The book of Acts is, in essence, a story of the apostles utilizing a kind of action research in sharing responsibility or power for doing the mission of God in more effective ways. The Apostles “turned the responsibilities (of the table to) to them (the seven men) in order to give more attention to prayer and the ministry of the word” (Acts 6:3-4). Their ministry or journey was filled with new challenges and experiences, but they were led by the Holy Spirit to see the context of the people they are leading. The Holy Spirit led the apostles, who recognized the importance of sharing responsibility or power for spreading the Gospel to both the Jews and the Gentiles. The chosen seven men gathered information about the people there and managed the table while the Apostle were praying and teaching the Gospel to the world. The apostles applied the best leadership practice that would best connect with the people and context they had experienced. “So, the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith” (Acts 6:7). This may not be a perfect equivalence to the research question, but for

me, this shows that understanding the context prior to doing action required in any case study research.

Case study research in a church requires listening to the voice of the Holy Spirit through people, who are from the ground to see and know the context of the people. This is a theological perspective of reading and collecting the contextual data that comes prior to planning any research. This is a discernment piece that I think made my research method the right choice for addressing my research question from a theological perspective.

Key Lenses

In order to find out relevant contextual leadership for the congregation, the researcher uses theoretical, Biblical and theological lenses for examining the research. A brief introduction of the lenses was presented in this introduction of the thesis.

Theoretical Lenses

There are many theoretical lenses that can have provided the richness and depth of the research. The researcher limited the theoretical lenses to the three theoretical lenses that he believed would be most relevant for examining the research. They are *adaptive leadership*, *appreciative leadership* and *missional leadership*. In general, these three lenses will help leaders to understand the current cultural context of Chin churches in the US and examine theories about how the social and cultural context of the US influences Chin churches in the US.

Adaptive Leadership

There are two types of challenges that leaders are facing in leadership practice; adaptive and technical challenges. In short, in terms of technical challenges, the system had required knowledge and skills that need to be applied by people. In adaptive challenges, on the other hand, require people to have some kind of new learning, new discoveries, and adjustments in the entire organization. .”⁵ Again, Ronald Heifetz views leadership in terms of “adaptive work” in his book *Leadership Without Easy Answers*, which he calls for a leader to be both “active and reflective” which means leader to have the ability to “alternative and between participating and observing”.⁶ Contextual leadership is a leadership practice that leaders are both active participants and at the same time observers of the organizational leadership practice.

Interpretive Leadership

One of the main purposes of contextual leadership is to help others to understand spiritual meaning accordingly to the context they live. Scott Cormode, in his book *Making Spiritual Sense*, states, “Christian leadership is basically an act of theological interpretation.” He also states that “the purpose of Christian leadership is to help other

⁵ Ronald Heifetz, Alexander Grashow and Marty Linsky, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business Press, 2009), 57.

⁶ Ronald A. Heifetz, *Leadership Without Easy Answers* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 1994), 36.

people understand the spiritual meaning for their own theological meaning.”⁷ Leaders need help other people to interpret theological meaning themselves without the coach of other people.

Missional Leadership

Lesslie Newbigin in his book, *The Open Secret: An Introduction in the Theology of Mission*, used the term mission as, “*missio Dei*” meaning the “Mission of God.” He further defined that “mission is not merely the activities of the church, rather, mission is fundamentally the result of God’s initiative.”⁸ Again, Van Gelder and Dwight Zscheile state, “trine God is a missionary God who sends the church into the world. God’s mission in the world is related to the reign (kingdom) of God. The missional church is an incarnational ministry sent to engage a postmodern, post-Christendom and globalized context.”⁹ The internal life of the missional church focuses on every believer living as a disciple engaging in missional leadership.

Biblical Lenses

There are several lenses in the Bible that can be quoted for this project. However, in this limited sub-topic, the researcher picked some primary lenses that related to the

⁷ Scott Cormode, *Making Spiritual Sense: Christian Leaders as Spiritual Interpreters* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2006), xi.

⁸ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Open Secret: An Introduction in the Theology of Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: WM. B. Eerdmans, 1995), 137.

⁹ Craig Van Gelder and Dwight J. Zscheile, *The Missional Church in Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 4.

project such as the leadership concept of Moses, the selection of deacons in Acts chapter six, Jesus and the Samaritan woman, and love and compassion from the Bible.

The Leadership Concept of Moses: Creating Spaces for Others

The leadership concept of Moses from Exodus chapter 18 become the oldest leadership model that accepted contextual leadership of the time. Moses accepted the advice of Jethro to appoint other leaders to judge others on his behalf. In other words, Moses allowed people from ground level to lead others based according to the contexts of the people and the land.

The Selection of Deacons in Acts Chapter Six

The selection of deacons we see in Acts chapter 6 is also associated with the leadership style of Moses and Jethro. The Apostles selected seven other men to serve the table and care for the widows. As a result, the Apostles were able to have enough time to concentrate on the Word of God for effective spiritual leadership. That is to say, the Apostles abandoned their old leadership style by creating spaces for other people to participate in a wider leadership role based on the context of the people.

Jesus and the Samaritan Women

Jesus and the Samaritan women we read in John 4:4-26 highlights clearly that the Christian mission has no boundary in the world. In other word, contextual leadership has no restriction for leading people for achieving the goals of the organization. Leader allows every single person in the organization to share their respective talents in the

leadership role of the organization regardless of their skin color, religion, social, and educational background. Jesus' engagement with the Samaritan woman destroyed the social and religious boundaries that blocked the relationship between the Jews and the Samaritans (John 4:4-26). Jesus bridged the gaps of all social and religious classes of the Jews and the Samaritans.

Love and Compassion

The term that we read "love and compassion" from the Bible becomes most accurate to exercise in the daily practical leadership practice of congregational leaders. In the Bible, we can see "love" as one aspect of missional leadership: "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son" (John 3:16). The unconditional love of God the Father sent His only begotten Son to save the world. God the Father showed how He loved the world through sending His only son to the world in human form. In other words, the triune God incarnates as a human form to show His love (*agape*) to the world regardless of human sins, color and race. Contextual leadership is not only about leading people who love us but also about loving people as they are. Rather, it is about loving even our enemy by the love (*agape*) of God and allowing them to contribute their talents for the leadership development of the congregation.

Moreover, contextual leadership is a about compassion, caring for those who need help both within and outside of the organization. Matthew writes how Jesus' compassion moved him to serve the hungry people: "When Jesus saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd"

(Matthew 9: 35-36). It is the suffering of the Father who is giving up his own Son (Romans 8:32). Contextual leadership engages people to have deep passion for others and dare to suffer for other people they are leading.

Theological Lenses

The researcher uses four theological lenses for exploring effective contextual leadership for this research. The lenses are, contextual theology, the sending and social trinity, liberation, and authority.

Contextual Theology

Stephen B. Bevans, in his book “*Models of Contextual Theology*” defines contextual theology as “an attempt to understand Christian faith in terms of a particular context.” This becomes a meaningful theological imperative for us.¹⁰ Contextual theology seeks to understand the nature of theology in a new way for a particular context. Besides, Bevans also argues that theology should not be simply seen as an intellectual understanding but intelligent action or response, engaging in the act of doing theology as a conversation.¹¹ Because of the different culture and language barriers, the Chin people in the US had seldom relationship or connection with their neighboring people.

¹⁰ Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis books, 2003), 3.

¹¹ Ibid.

The Sending and Social Trinity

God sends Jesus into the world with a special commission. The theme of God's sending Jesus on a special mission occurs in the four gospels in various ways. The affirmation is made in the direct statements (John 8:42; 11:42) and indirectly through Jesus' references to his Father as the one who sent him (5:24, 30). The sending does not stop with Jesus. Both the Father and the Son send the Paraclete (14:26; 15:26). Additionally, Jesus sends the disciples (13:20a) who, along with the Paraclete, continue the mission just as John the Baptist was sent to inaugurate it (3:28). This threefold sending of John the Baptist, Jesus, and the disciples-Paraclete serves to incorporate "sending" into the flow of the gospel and to highlight its importance.

This "sending" is related to the idea that the God above is related to the world below through Christ as the one sent. Here, we see that "sending" symbolizes the doctrine of revelation. According to the gospel of John, there is only one possible way to gain knowledge of the invisible Father when the Father himself sends someone with the knowledge. Jesus is the emissary or representative sent to reveal the Father and the things above. One important aspect of trinitarian relationship to the world is to engage people to live as children of God and building relationships through communication, conversing with one another. This conversation also leads the team to unity as Moltmann developed

a social doctrine of Holy Trinity whose, “unity is constituted by mutual indwelling and reciprocal interpretation.”¹²

Liberation

Liberation theology developed as a result of a systematic, disciplined reflection on Christian faith and its implications. It is worth noting that the theologians who formulated liberation theology mostly do not teach in the so-called universities and seminaries. They are a small group of Catholic or Protestant clergy who have direct contact with the grass-roots groups as advisors to priests, sisters, or pastors. Since they spend at least some time working directly with the poor themselves, the questions they deal with arise out of their direct contact with the poor based on the context.

Moreover, the aim of liberation theology is to find its embodiment in the Christian ecclesial base communities. They are small, lay-led groups of Christians that see themselves as part of the Church and work together to improve their lot and establish a more just society. Liberation must be inserted into the entire contemporary reality of human life and is a faith reality, one of the basic biblical themes, deeply inscribed in the salvific mission of Christ, in the work of redemption, and in his teaching.

¹² Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, viii.

Authority

The concept of authority related to contextual leadership. How are decisions made about doctrine and practice in the church based on the context of the people? In the early pioneer context of the church, who decides? Theoretically, the answer is local believers. Early literature on contextualization was questioned for overemphasizing the missionary's role. However, nowadays, there is welcome sensitivity to issues of power and process in the leadership of the church. Contextual leadership puts emphasis on the processes of biblical reflection and theologizing in the new faith communities, based on the latter's own understanding for a given point in time—of the word of God.

Outline of Chapters

The introduction chapter explains a brief introduction to the resettlement of the Chin people in the United States, historical background of the research site, and how the research subject and research questions emerged from the immigrant Chin churches in the US based on their context. It also presents how Chin churches are facing challenges to adapt, the culture, custom, lifestyle, and leadership practice in the new land. It also explains the research methodology for the research, and purpose of the study, and the lenses that used for the research were briefly presented as well.

Chapter two presents the brief historical background of Myanmar, geographical location and ethnography of the Chin people, how they became Christians among majority Buddhists in Myanmar. It points out that being minority Christians in Myanmar,

the Chin people face an alienation from their fellow country people. It also explores some factors, which are the possible factors of immigration choice. The Buddhists view Christianity as the heritage of western colonialism. It presents how the Chin people endured conflict between minority Christians and the majority Buddhists. It also exposes the suffering of the Chin people under the exploitation of the military junta and the Burmanization policy of making the country as Buddhism's country. It also explains how the Chin people resettle into the US.

Chapter three explores theoretical lenses that will be helpful for congregational leaders to find effective contextual leadership practice for the church. Chapter four also presents biblical and theological lenses that will help to discover how to lead people actively without straying from the biblical narrative and the will of God. The goal of using these lenses is to observe and see the most relevant leadership practice for the Chin immigrant churches in the US and to identify the relationship and relevance of using these lenses in the lens of the immigrant Chin churches. It also argues that the Chin immigrant pastors need to check and develop their theory and method of pastoral leadership and practice through these lenses in order that they can keep their church to be a living station for their members.

Chapter five underlines my research methods and designs. It mentions the methods and designs of qualitative case study research that I have used in this research. It includes the selection of the research sites, selecting the participants for the research and research assistants. It also presents biblical, theological and theoretical lenses for exploring effective contextual leadership practice for immigrant churches in the US.

The research results and analysis in chapter six brings the findings of the research results from conversation with focus groups, personal individual interviews, and electronic mail surveys. It also uses some relevant immigrant and pastoral leadership literatures in order to discuss, reflect, and develop a more holistic role of the Chin church to its members.

Chapter seven is the conclusion chapter. It summarizes the research findings in brief. It first examines the impact of immigration on the lived experiences of Chin immigrant people in the United States. Secondly, it demonstrates the place and struggles congregational leadership among Chin churches in the US are facing in terms of their ministries for survival in a new land. Thirdly, it will attempt to redefine practical contextual leadership for the church in congregational leadership as proposed by the methods of case study research and appreciative inquiry.

Summary

This introduction chapter presents the introduction to the research subject and research questions, research methodology, and research design. It also presents a brief historical background of the resettlement of the Chin in the US that related to the research site. The statement of the problem and purpose of study in this chapter became the important subtopic for the chapter. We now move on to the next chapter, which will explore some detailed historical background of the Chin people in Myanmar and how Christianity came to the Chin land. Additionally, the next chapter will help explain to the

readers how the Chin people suffered social, political, and religious oppression in Myanmar before their resettlement in the US.

CHAPTER TWO

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Chapter one presented the introduction of the research question, a brief history of the research site, and research design. This chapter discusses the historical background of the Chin which will be helpful for understanding the context of this research. This chapter also presents some facts that have forced the Chins to flee from their home country to avoid religious and political oppression of military government in Myanmar.

Brief Historical Background of Myanmar

The Chin people who resettled in the United States of America came from Myanmar,¹ one of the most ethnically diverse countries in the world that shares its border with Bangladesh and India in the west, Tibet and China in the north, and Laos and Thailand in the east. The coastline of the Indian Ocean forms a natural boundary to the south of the country. Major ethnic groups in the country are the Burman, Shan, Karen, Mon, Rakhine, Chin, and Kachin. Ethnic minority groups (Shan, Karen, Mon, Rakhine, Chin and Kachin) are estimated to represent 32 percent of the entire population in the

¹ The official English name for Burma was changed by the Military government from the “Union of Burma” to the “Union of Myanmar” in 1989. The researcher uses the name “Myanmar” instead of “Burma” in this research.

country.² The Burman people are the predominant ethnic group at 68 percent of the total population of the country, and a majority of them are adherents of Theravada Buddhism. The latest census statistics from 2014 show that Burma has a population of sixty million, of which the estimated minority ethnic population is about fifteen million.³ The ethnic groups in Myanmar are divided into three categories according to their ethnic-linguistic origins such as: (1) the Tibeto-Burman origin comprised of the Burman, Rakhine, Chin, and Kachin; (2) the Sino-Tibetan origin comprised of Karen, Kayah, and Shan; and (3) the Austro-Asiatic origin comprised of Mon and others.⁴

Myanmar, formerly known as Burma, fell under the colonial rule of the British in 1885, after three invasions in 1825, 1852, and 1885. The British annexed it to the province of British India empire in 1885 to 1937 after dividing India into two countries. A century later, under the leadership of General Aung San, Myanmar gained her independence from the British in 1948.⁵ Shortly after General Aung San, U Nu, the first elected Prime Minister of post-independence, led the political system of Myanmar from 1948-1962, following the democratic principle constitution of 1947 in which sovereignty was reside within the people. According to the 1947 constitution, “equality of rights and

² Bruce Matthews, “The Legacy of Tradition and Authority: Buddhism and the Nation in Burma,” in *Buddhism and Politics in Twentieth Century Asia* (New York: Pinter, 1999), 42.

³ “Census of Myanmar Not Optional: UN,” *Myanmar Times*, <http://www.mmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/3620-census-inmyanmar-not-optional-un.html>, accessed November 2, 2019.

⁴ Ministry of Information, “Facts and Figures 2002” (Yangon: Union of Myanmar, 2002), 5.

⁵ Samuel Ngun Ling, *Christianity through Our Neighbors’ Eyes: Rethinking the 200 Years Old American Baptist Missions in Myanmar* (Yangon: Judson Research Centre, MIT, 2014), 95.

opportunity were guaranteed for all citizens; subject to the demands of public order and law, citizens were guaranteed liberties of expression, assembly, and association; and an independent judiciary was established.”⁶ Myanmar was growing fast in a short period of time in terms of its national politics, education, and economics. Eventually, it became one of the most developed countries in Southeast Asia during the post-independent period until the military regime took power in 1962. The Burmese organizations and civil societies were well developed during the post-independence period.

U Nu’s leadership came to an end when he promulgated Buddhism as state religion and inserted it into the constitutional amendment of 1961.⁷ It was strongly rejected by the ethnic Christians, especially the Chin and Kachin, who viewed it as “another form of Burmese cultural and political domination.”⁸ The promulgation of Buddhism as state religion gave rise to the Kachin armed resistance in the early 1960s, followed by Chin armed revolution in the 1980s, to defend their people from forced assimilation into the Burman culture.⁹ The Myanmar Council of Churches (MCC)—then Burma Council of Churches—also released a statement against U Nu’s proposal: “The council is deeply grieved because the concept of a state religion is completely opposed to

⁶ Robert I. Rothberg, ed., *Burma: Prospects for a Democratic Future* (Washington, DC: Brooking Institution Press, 1998), 50.

⁷ Ling, *Christianity through Our Neighbors’ Eyes*, 119.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Donald E. Smith, *Religion and Politics in Burma* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1965), 250.

the modern democratic ideal of separation between religion and the state.”¹⁰ As a result, U Nu’s political schemes encouraged the early disintegration of the country with the rising tide of various national conflicts and ethnic armed revolutions, which continue to the present.

During this post-independent period, Myanmar began to experience a series of armed ethnic revolution groups on the one side, and the resurgence of Buddhism on the other. The majority of ethnic groups in Myanmar identify themselves as culturally distinct from the Burman Buddhists, and the majority of them happen to be Christians. For the nationalist Burmans, the presence of ethnic Christians in Myanmar has always been culturally offensive and a political threat to national unity. This is mainly because of “their misperceptions of Christianity as a political tool of Western imperialism.”¹¹ The Burmans fully perceived Christianity as the British colonial religion since the British disestablished Buddhism as state religion from 1886 and replaced Buddhist monastery education with American missionary education system and the protection of missionaries and the new converts to Christianity.¹² Again, Burmese, the majority people in Myanmar, cannot accept nationality apart from their religion, Buddhism, and sees other religions especially Christians, as disloyal citizens for the country, Myanmar. Donald E Smith also

¹⁰ Ibid., 249.

¹¹ Samuel Ngun Ling, “Ethnicity, Religion and Theology in Asia: An Exploration from the Myanmar Context,” in *Ethnicity, Religion and Theology: A Consultation on Ethnic Minorities in the Mekong Region*, ed. Hanns Hoerschelmann (Shatin: Mekong Mission Forum Publication, 2007), 6 .

¹² Ling, “Ethnicity, Religion and Theology in Asia,” 56.

stated, “The Burmese people cannot think of nationality as apart from religion that they hold because Buddhism welded the Burmese together and their ideas of nation-hood rooted its inception to Buddhism.”¹³ Lastly, this misunderstanding has led the nationalist Burmans to perceive the ethnic Myanmar Christians as being merely instruments of the white men’s scheme, which embodies destructive colonialist ideals. Thus, the Christian presence in Myanmar has never been regarded as a purely spiritual entity but often as a political threat.

U Nu was succeeded by Ne Win’s socialist party in 1962-1987. Ne Win made a new constitution in 1974, contrary to U Nu’s idea of making Buddhism state’s religion, which allowed “right of everyone to profess and practice his or her religion freely.” However, Buddhism continued to receive special support or prioritization under the socialist government, though the government claimed that Buddhism ceased to be the state religion.¹⁴ The constitution allowed “religious freedom” but the unconstitutional and unofficial recognition of Buddhism as state religion continued to persist in the mind of the Burmese till today. Churches of minority groups, especially Christians, are allowed “freedom of worship” only in the compound of the church. Christian literatures are allowed limited circulation only. Distributing or printing the Bible is strictly prohibited.

The government established special budgets for establishing Buddhist temples and pagodas in many areas of the country with special permission but there is no permit

¹³ Smith, *Religion and Politics in Burma*, 82.

¹⁴ Maung Htin Aung, *History of Burma* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), 327.

for the Christians to establish new buildings for the church in their own land. The Christians encounter not only religious persecution but also social and political discrimination in their homeland that led them to seek a secure life for their future. As a result, the Chin people resettled in the US as immigrants and became the second largest ethnic group of Burmese immigrants in the US after the Karen ethnic people. In order to know more about the Chins, this chapter will inquire who the Chin people are, where they came from, and why many of them have left their homeland to resettle in western countries such as the US. It is also necessary to take a brief look at how they began to embrace Christianity and their resettlement in the US.

Geographical Location and Ethnography of the Chins

The Chin State lies between North Latitude 21-24 15' and between East Longitude 93 15'-94. It stretches 300 miles north to south and 40-100 miles east to west. There are nine townships with the estimation 473,000 of population. Chin State covers an area of 13,907 Sq. miles.¹⁵ They reside in the country's western mountainous region. The mountains range 5,000 to 10,000 feet above the sea level.¹⁶ Villages and towns are situated within densely forested mountains. Republic of the Union of Myanmar census, collected in 2014, reports there are nearly five hundred thousand Chins in the Chin Land

¹⁵ Myo Thant, ed., *Myanmar: Facts and Figures* (Yangon: Printing and Publishing Enterprise, 2002), 34-35.

¹⁶ Vervest Wim, *The Lost Dictionary: A History of the Chin People, the Newland Family and the American Baptist Chin Mission* (Vivid Publishing, Western Australia, 2014), 1.

and more than three hundred thousand in the plains of Burma.¹⁷ The number of diaspora Chins is roughly estimated to be one million across the globe.¹⁸ The Chin state shares its border with India on the west, Bangladesh on the southwest, Rakhine State to the south, and Sagaing and Magway Division to the east. Some Chin experts have speculated that mountainous landscapes and dense forests have historically made communication difficult and served as a source of sharp divisions among the Burmese-Chin, including clan divisions and tribalism. The unfortunate consequences of divisions and disharmony among the Chin tribes warrant carefully defining the scope of the term “Chin.”

Defining the Scope for the Term “Chin”

The term “Chin” has been used to refer to different things among the Chin scholars and political leaders. No consensus exists regarding the origin of the Chin; competing claims originate by the 1st century AD, and range as far as China. Even among the Chin land inhabitants, many do not identify with the term “Chin” because of the variety of languages, dialects, cultures, traditions, political views, and perceived ethnic and cultural difference.

Many Chin political leaders claim that the term ‘Chin’ is a geographical identity used as a means of political control by the Burmese government. This claim entails a

¹⁷ http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/sources/census/2010_phc/Myanmar/MMR-2014-08-28-provres.pdf, accessed November 3, 2019. NB: There were different groups of people who claim to have Chin identity in the plain areas of the country, e.g., “Asho Chin.”

¹⁸ Hrang Hlei, *The Formation of Chin Immigrant Congregations in the United States: Discovering their Ecclesiological Identities* (PhD Thesis, Luther Seminary, Saint Paul, Minnesota, 2015), 10.

negative value judgment and is mostly used among the ‘Zomi’ group.¹⁹ Other scholars suggest that the term ‘Chin’ refer to six major tribes (Asho, Cho, Khumi, Laimi, Mizo, and Zomi), because they share a common origin.²⁰ Modern generations have speculated in a more generic term beyond the Chin land habitants, reaching to the western regions of India such as Nagas, Manipur, Mizoram and northern state of Burma and Kachin. The most recent and contemporary assertion derived from the divisions made in terms of districts and townships.

There are two districts in the north (Hakha district and Falam district) and one district in the south (Mindat district) in Chin state. Hakha district has two townships, Hakha and Thlantlang. Falam has three townships, Falam, Tedim, and Tonzang. Mindat has five townships, Mindat, Kanpetlet, Matupi, Paletwa, and Rezua. In order to reduce the likelihood of introducing bias, the researcher prefers to use geographical district terminology, and the research work will be focused mainly on the northerners, Hakha, Thantlang, and Falam townships.

The Burmese government uses the term ‘Chin’ for the Chin land inhabitants, but the term has several demeaning connotations. Due to these negative connotations, adaption of the term was widely debated. Negative connotations notwithstanding, the

¹⁹ The website defines ‘Zomi’ as not one of the Chin tribal group, instead claims as a separate tribe as Chin and/or Lushai, <http://indyzomi.weebly.com/who-are-the-zomi-the-generic-name.html> accessed January 22, 2020.

²⁰ Hlei, *The Formation of Chin Immigrant Congregations in the United States*, 10.

term “Chin” has emerged as an acceptable general term among the Chin tribal groups in recent years.

From the religious perspective, after the arrival of Arthur and Laura Carson, a missionary couple from US to Hakha, the capital of Chin State, on March 15, 1899, there were different missionary works and religious movements within each tribal region, the nature and formation of Christianity took shape in somewhat similar ways among the Chins.²¹ From political and religious perspectives Chin is the official term used when referring to this collection of the peoples. Therefore, for lack of a better term, the researcher will employ the term ‘Chin’ throughout this thesis.

The Origin of Chin Ethnic People of Myanmar

Regarding the origin of the Chins, native Chin scholar Hai Vung suggests that “the Chins migrated from somewhere in China, and then the Mongolia plateau, Kansu and Ko Ko Nor.”²² On one hand, Chum Awi observes that “the Chins were freedom seekers as well as strong preservers of their cultures, who came to live in the present Chin State of Myanmar at the beginning part of 1000 AD.”²³ However, Lehman’s hypothesis is somewhat different stating that “Chin history begins after A.D. 750, with the rise of

²¹ Robert G. Johnson, *History of American Baptist Chin Mission*, vol. 1 (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1988), 41-43. The Baptist missionary couple works began to take shape in Hakha township in 1899 while another Baptist missionary works took place in Tedim Township in around the same time.

²² Hai Vung, “Lai in the Chin Hills” (B.D. Thesis, Myanmar Institute of Theology, Yangon, 1996), 74.

²³ Chum Awi, “Thinking about the Unity of the Chin: Historical and Christian Mission Points of View,” in *Thinking about Christianity and the Chins in Myanmar*, ed. Cung Lian Hup (Yangon: Published by the Editor, 1999), 19.

Burmans civilization and the Chin's interaction with them."²⁴ A native Chin scholar Vumson more strongly insists that "When the Burmans descended to the plains of central Burma, during the ninth century, the Chin people were already in the Chindwin Valley."²⁵

Tradition claims that the Chins moved to the Upper Chindwin of Kalay Valley as their original settlement was destroyed by the flood. Since then Chin people have been divided into different tribes and began to speak different dialects. While the Chins were living peacefully in the Upper Chindwin of the Kale-Kabaw Valley for more than a century, they founded their capital at Khampat. But their destiny changed when the Shan took power in 1395 and built the great city of Kalaymyo with double walls. They conquered the Chins and forced them to work on the construction of the fortress and double walls of the town. Tradition claims that those who could not bear the hardship of manual labor were forced to migrate to the hill region where they established a new settlement.²⁶

The *Cimnuai* settlement was located in the present Tedim township, whereas another group, *Laimi*, had made their new settlement in *Lailun* in Falam township. Another group who first settled in *Locom* finally became the Mizo tribe, which now

²⁴ F. K. Lehman, *The Structure of Chin Society: A Tribal People of Burma Adapted to a Non-Western Civilization* (Urbana, IL: Illinois University Press, 1980), 22.

²⁵ Vumson, *Zo History* (Aizawl: Published by the Author, 1987), 35.

²⁶ Sing Khaw Khai, *Zo People and Their Culture: A Historical, Cultural Study and Critical Analysis of Zo and Its Ethnic Tribes* (Churachandpur: Khampu Hatzaw New Lamka-G, 1995), 4.

populates part of the Mizoram State in India. Prior to these settlements, there is no historical evidence that divides the Chin into the Laimi, Mizo, and Zomi tribes.²⁷

The majority of the Chins migrated to the hill regions of the present Chin State in Myanmar, the Mizoram and Manipur States in India, and the Chittagaung Hills tracks in Bangladesh. However, some groups remained in the Chindwin Valley becoming known as *Chin-pun* and *Chin-me* as they maintained their old-fashioned tattooed faces.

Before the British annexation, little is known about the Chin people. The British began the Chin Hills expedition in 1888-89 because of three reasons: the Chins had consistently disturbed the British territory in the plains by raiding the Burman villages, the British wanted to open a trade route between Chittagong and Kale valleys, and they wanted to arrest Shwe Yo Pyu, a revolutionary, who fled into the Chin Hills in 1887-88.²⁸ In fact, as Carey and Tuck note, the British were not interested in the Chin Hills, calling the area “unprofitable, barren hills.”²⁹ But the Chins were forcefully integrated into the British Empire in 1896 upon the promulgation of the Chin Hills Regulation. The British

²⁷ Lian H. Sakhong, *Religion and Politics among the Chin People in Burma (1896-1949)* (Uppsala: Uppsala University: 2000), 79.

²⁸ Bertram S. Carey and H. N. Tuck, *The Chin Hills vol. 1* (Aizawl: Firma KLM Private Ltd., 1976), 26.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 73.

observed three different policies in their administration: the indirect rule policy,³⁰ the divide and rule systems,³¹ and the circle administration system.³²

Political and Social Structure

The social status and religious changes made possible by the work of missionaries were promising for the Chin people, but those changes were not promising in the political context for the Burmans' government. While Christianity may have been a godsend to the Chin and for the Burmese, Christianity was not well-received by the Burmans and military government.

The Burmans have always tried to impose one political ideology on its ethnic minorities; this practice is known as "Burmanization." This literally means "one race, one language, and one religion" must be adopted within the nation of Burma. Dr. Hlei summarizes the ideology, "The political implication of this concept is a belief that Myanmar should be a country of only one race (Burman), one language (Burmese), and only one religion (Buddhism)."³³ Oppressions of every kind were committed to implement the ideology of Burmanization; and due to their differing

³⁰ Sakhong, *Religion and Politics among the Chin People in Burma*, 187-88.

³¹ Cung Lian Hup, "Innocent Pioneers and Their Triumphs in a Foreign Land: A Critical Look at the Work of the American Baptist Mission in the Chin Hills (1899-1966) in Burma from a Missiological Perspective" (Th.D. diss., Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, 1993), 46, 49.

³² Ibid.

³³ Hlei, *The Formation of Chin Immigrant Congregations in the United States*, 20.

political views, religion, and ethnicity, the Chin people faced oppression. The Chin people then ultimately face oppression, discrimination, and marginalization from its military government and the Burmans.

Oppressions and discriminations include taking away the Chin resident's properties by the Burmans military officials, destroying the Chin's farms and cattle which were the major agricultures in Chin land, and destroying churches properties and removing crosses erected to represent the emblem of the faith of the land. From the national level, discrimination includes ignoring educational privileges and especially banning teaching the Chin literatures in public school. The central government also reduced state funds for economic wellbeing and prohibiting for government official positions for the Chin people, which means they are not allowed to become department head or government officials in any government office.

The Chin state has its own constituency and governing system varying according to tribal group. Each tribe governed is by its own leaders, known as tribal chiefs or in some cases kings. The tribal chief played a primary role in building and protecting the community. Strait explains the governance system, "When the British assumed control, shortly before the turn of the Feudalist century, they found the Chins with their indigenous form of government. It was a kind of feudalism functioning through chiefs, headmen, and elders."³⁴ People entrusted all of their resources to their leaders regardless

³⁴ Chester U Strait, *The Chin People: A Selective History and Anthropology of the Chin People* (Aizawl: Xlibris Publishing LLC, 1960), 162.

of how they achieved such standing. Leadership was achieved through wars and other displays of strength. Strait notes, “A naturally brave and daring man become leader even though he might be of low rank or even a slave.”³⁵ Cooperation with a system imposed by the Burmans was distasteful for the Chin people, especially when the tribal chiefs commanded allegiance to other power.

Religious works and practices were freely allowed without any interference until the Burmese military regime took power and control of its government in 1962. Discriminations against those of non-Buddhist faith were originally limited to Christians, but more recently expanded to include Muslims. Since the western influence was prominent due to the missionary work among Chin, Christianity became their social/ethnic identity; although western influence and Christianity among the Chin long predate the establishment of the modern Burmese military government, it is seen as rebellious behavior by the government. The people felt threatened in their social, political, educational, and religious life. This unfortunate and unjust state of affairs defines the relationship between the Chin people and the Burmese government. Due to the constellation of its political, social, and religious differences, the level of oppression continued to escalate, and eventually forced the Chin to flee their homeland and emigrate around the world. This dynamic caused another form of religious movement in the immigration process, which will be discussed in the following section.

³⁵ Strait, *The Chin People*, 163.

Christianity and the Chins

Before the arrival of the American missionaries in the Chin State, the Chin people practiced animism, which involved sacrificing selected animals to please the angry evil spirits. Pleasing the evil spirits meant to drive them away so that they would not harm the people. They practiced animism for centuries. They lived in a world of ghosts, witches, sorcerers, and evil spirits. They never heard of Jesus Christ.³⁶ In Chin animism, the works of the spirits played the most essential part. They believed in the superstitious personification of the spirits, both in nature and in human form. They believed that failure to make propitiation to the spirits caused disease and misfortunes. Leprosy, abortion or miscarriage, and plagues were presumed as something inflicted by evil spirits. They believed that spirits dwell in the mountains, trees, rocks, fountains, rivers, fields, and other inanimate objects.³⁷

The arrival of the American missionaries to the Chin Hills was a turning point for the life of its people not only from their traditional religious belief but also in transforming their culture and social life. Khen Za Moong strongly supports, “The American Baptist Mission brought Christianity to the Chin Hills. From a backward belief and primitive custom, the Chins were advanced to a civilized and spiritual state of faith and hope. Christianity has done much towards the Chins spiritual and worldly advance

³⁶ Robert G. Johnson, *History of the American Baptist Chin Mission*, vol. 1 (Valley Forge, PA: Published by the Author, 1988), 102.

³⁷ Samuel Ngun Ling, “The Gospel Encounters the Chin Culture,” in *Thinking about Christianity and the Chins in Myanmar*, ed. Cung Lian Hup (Yangon: Published by the Editor, 1999), 100-02.

into the modern world. Christianity is now the overwhelming religion of the Chins.”³⁸

The first missionaries were Reverend Arthur Carson and his wife Laura, who arrived at Hakha on March 15, 1899, where they opened the mission station. Johnson, the last missionary to the Chins, reported on the Church in the Chin Hills, which falls into four periods. He writes,

The entering Church- the time of the pioneers, covers the first ten years, to the death of Carson and arrival of Herbert Cope: 1899-1908; the emerging Churches- from the death of Carson to about 1924 when the young churches achieved self-support; the edification of the Churches- from 1924 to 1944, when World War II stopped missionary work. During this period the churches entered almost every part of the northern Chin Hills; and the energized Churches- from 1942 to 1964. This period has seen the churches, on their own, sending missionaries to every part of the Chin Hills, the perfecting of church organization, and a tremendous increase in numbers.³⁹

There is no proper record of the growth of Chin’s Christianity as a whole after the missionaries were expelled from the country in 1966.⁴⁰ To make the story short, in Myanmar, the Chin State is considered the only “Christian state.”⁴¹ However, in order to diminish the Christian population in the country, the then ruling military government implemented its unwritten high policy throughout the country.

³⁸ Khen Za Moong, “Faith, Hope, and Love,” in *Christianity and the Chins in Myanmar*, ed. Cung Lian Hup (Yangon: Published by the Editor, 2003), 129.

³⁹ Robert Johnson, “The Church in the Chin Hills,” in *Thinking about Christianity and the Chins in Myanmar*, ed. Cung Lian Hup (Yangon: Published by the Editor, 1999), 26.

⁴⁰ David Van Bik, “That the Sowers and Reaper Will Rejoice Together,” in *Immanuel Baptist Church, Hakha, Fidi Magazine* vol. 1 (December 2001): 121.

⁴¹ Regarding the percentage of the Chin Christian population, some estimate as high as 97-98 percent in the state although some scholars put a lower estimate around 67 percent. However, to claim that 90 % of the population in the northern Chin State seems realistic. See Salai Za Bik, *About the Chin Refugees* (New Delhi: Published by Joint Action Committee, 2012), 29.

This high policy is summed up in three words: *Amyo*, which is a Burmese word literally means “race,” and signifies “only one race,” that is Burmese; *Batha* which means language and implies “only one language,” which is Burmese; and *Tatana*, which means “religion,” that holds “only one religion,” that is Buddhism. Smith also observes that “the promotion of Buddhism has traditionally been one of the chief functions of government in Burma.”⁴² The aim is to build one language, which is Burmese, and one religion, Buddhism, for all the citizens of Myanmar, which also called Burmanization of other ethnic groups.

The military government launched a special movement called *Buddhist Taungtan Tatana* in Burmese, which means “Buddhist Mission to the Hill Region” to the ethnic people who are already Christians, aiming the ethnic Christians to convert back to Buddhists to make the whole Myanmar a Buddhist land.⁴³ In order to implement this idea, the government also launched official government’s plan called *Natala* in Burmese, which means “Rural Development Program” for nurturing of young people from the bordering rural areas especially to the ethnic people.

The government established housings, schools and provide free supports to educate poor young people, who are already Christians from rural areas to indoctrinate to Buddhism. In this *Natala* school, it is mandatory for all students to bow down before the

⁴² Donald Eugene Smith, *Religion and Politics in Burma* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1965), 140.

⁴³ Ling, *The Gospel Encounters the Chin Culture*, 125.

Buddhist statue and cite its prayer every night and morning. The students from this school who passed matriculation exam, which is equivalenced to high school final in the US, are promised to become head officers in every government office, especially for Administrative Offices among ethnic people. As a result, there is no Christian officer in the governmental offices of Chin state.

Resettlement in the United States

Due to the oppression the Chin people faced in their homeland, they emigrated to Australia, various European countries, and the United States, seeking religious freedom and a better life. The population of the Chin people in the United States has grown rapidly during the last fifteen years. According to the report of the immigration statistics department of the United States, more than a million (1,085,483) refugees from around the world are admitted as refugees in the United States since 2000. Burmese refugees occupied 16% (173,735) of the total immigrants in 2018.⁴⁴ However, these numbers include three major ethnic groups in Burma: Chin, Karen, and Kachin. The Chin population in the United States is estimated to be one-third of the total Burmese immigrants.

As of January 2015, more than ten thousand Chins resettled and over thirty-two Chin churches were established in Indianapolis, Indiana. Rather incredibly, the city of

⁴⁴ The office of the Immigrations Statistic Annual Flow Reported in 2019 for the year of 2018. <http://www.dhs.gov/immigrationstatistics/country-and-nationality-2018>, accessed November 5, 2019.

Indianapolis now holds one-fourth of the entire US Chin population. Moreover, the Chin are located almost entirely within a single township and the adjoining small towns of Southport and Greenwood.

Looking at the size of the largest Chin denomination, CBC USA (represents Hakha and Thantlang Chin) that affiliates ninety-five Chin churches, there are at least two hundred Chin churches across the country.⁴⁵ The church grew from several few to more than two hundred churches within a decade. The church's exponential growth within such a short period of time indicates the vitality on one hand and the vulnerability on the other hand. This number projects a promising future, but does not guarantee a promising survival because of the challenges that arose within the religious structures.

The formations and establishments of Chin churches across the United States have similar natures. Considering the natures of Chin churches developments, the future of the Chin faith is unstable. The researcher therefore invites the attention to the very challenges the Chin churches face in the United States for its future.

Summary

This chapter has covered some introductory topics such as brief backgrounds of Myanmar, geographical location and ethnography of the Chins, defining the scope of the term "CHIN," the origin of the Chin ethnic people of Myanmar, political and social

⁴⁵ CBC USA, a Chin Baptist organization, affiliates 95 Chin churches in the United States. More information can be found at <http://chinbaptistchurchesusa.org> in native Hakha and Thantlang dialect (accessed November 5, 2019).

structure, Christianity and the Chins, and resettlement of the Chin in the United States.

We now move on to the next chapter, which engages with theoretical lenses of this project. It presents a basic implementation for exploring contextual leadership within the congregation from different perspective.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL LENSES

The previous chapter presented a brief socio-political and religious background of Myanmar. It also mentioned a short history of the Chin people, who they are, the geographical location and ethnography of the Chins, how they have suffered under the military regime, and how they have been forced to flee from their home country. This chapter engages with theoretical lenses to find out relevant contextual leadership for the congregation.

There are three theoretical lenses for examining the research. They are *adaptive leadership*, *interpretive leadership*, and *missional leadership*. In general, these three lenses will help leaders to understand the current cultural context of Chin churches in the US and examine theories about how the social and cultural context of the US influences Chin churches in the US. This will help leaders take more focus on contextual leadership that is based on the context of the people they are leading in the new land.

Adaptive Leadership

There are two types of challenges that leaders are facing in leadership practice, adaptive and technical challenges. In short, in terms of technical challenges, the system has required knowledge and skills that need to be applied by people. Adaptive challenges, on the other hand, require people to have some kind of new learning, new discoveries,

and adjustments in the entire organization. In their book, *Leadership on the Line*, Ronald A. Heifetz and Marty Linsky explain how adaptive challenges issues related to cultural change in the leadership role. In the organization, “each person both shapes, and is shaped by the enterprise’s culture.”¹ Again, Ronald Heifetz views leadership in terms of “adaptive work” in his book *Leadership Without Easy Answers*, which he calls for a leader to be both “active and reflective,” which means a leader is to have the ability to “alternative and between participating and observing”.² Ronald Heifetz, Alexander Grashow, and Marty Linsky, in their book *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership*, also advise us to observe “some distance from those on the ground events.” The metaphor they use, “getting on the balcony” above the “dance floor” become useful diagnosis for adaptive leadership.³

Chin churches in America are facing some challenges to distinguish the differences between technical and adaptive challenge in the leadership role of the congregation. Using the lens of adaptive leadership, we can ask the following questions to answer those challenges: How do leaders of Chin immigrant congregations apply this lens to identify what is going on among their members and in their communities? How have they addressed the leadership challenges within their new social and cultural context

¹ Ronald Heifetz, Alexander Grashow and Marty Linsky, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business Press, 2009), 57.

² Ronald A. Heifetz, *Leadership Without Easy Answers* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 1994), 36.

³ Heifetz, Grashow and Linsky, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership*, 7.

that call for adaptive changes? How have they dealt with the social and cultural factors that have brought conflicts among their members, especially among their young people? The lens of adaptive leadership theory will help Chin leaders to discover together how to apply adaptive leadership theory for church's leadership, to address the social and cultural context that calls for adaptive change in the new land.

Interpretive Leadership

One of the main purposes of contextual leadership is to help others to understand spiritual meaning according to the context in which they live. Scott Cormode, in his book *Making Spiritual Sense*, states, "Christian leadership is basically an act of theological interpretation." He also states that "the purpose of Christian leadership is to help other people understand the spiritual meaning for their own theological meaning."⁴ Leaders need to help other people to interpret theological meaning themselves without the coach of other people. Mark Lau Branson in his article called, "Interpretive Leadership During Social Dislocation," also argues that, "interpretive leadership requires to connect with the background, distributes leadership and experimentally innovates into new realities of a different context."⁵ Similarly, Dwight Zscheile also asserts in his article, "The Trinity, Leadership and Power," that, "interpretive leadership involves with deep relational conversation of listening and speaking where all are participating in the process of

⁴ Scott Cormode, *Making Spiritual Sense: Christian Leaders as Spiritual Interpreters* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2006), xi.

⁵ Mark Lau Branson, "Interpretive Leadership During Social Dislocation: Jeremiah and Social Imaginary," *Journal of Religious Leadership* 8, no. 9 (Spring 2009): 47.

leadership for change.”⁶ Zscheile also defines that, “interpretive leadership listens seriously to the voice, hopes, fears and dreams of every people in the church and interprets them communally according to the Biblical narrative.”⁷

Contextual leadership encourages leaders to have sound interpretation to the daily lived struggle of their people and make spiritual meaning in light of the biblical narrative and teaching. It also helps leaders seriously listen to the voice, hopes, and dreams of the people they are leading.

Missional Leadership

Lesslie Newbigin in his book, *The Open Secret: An Introduction in the Theology of Mission*, used the term mission as *missio Dei*, meaning the “Mission of God.” He further defined that “mission is not merely the activities of the church, rather, mission is fundamentally the result of God’s initiative.”⁸ Similarly, in his book of *Transforming Mission*, David Bosch defines mission as “being derived from the very nature of God.” In this mission, Bosch also states an invisible involvement or action of the Trinitarian movement of mission with “Father, Son and Holy Spirit sending the church into the

⁶ Dwight Zscheile, “The Trinity, Leadership and Power,” *Journal of Religious Leadership* 6, no. 2 (Fall 2007): 57-63.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 76.

⁸ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Open Secret: An Introduction in the Theology of Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: WM. B. Eerdmans, 1995), 137.

world.”⁹ The implication of the Trinitarian understanding of missional church is that the Trinity exists in relational community and the leadership of the missional church is called to reflect the nature of the triune God and live as a relational community. For Moltmann, the redeemed community of the kingdom became an essential focus for missional leadership. The self-humiliation of God and the indwelling of the Spirit brings together the important themes for missional leaders as self-sharing or suffering servant for other people.¹⁰ This includes sharing, self-sacrifice, humiliation, self-emptying, communication, love, fellowship, and care for creation.

Again, Van Gelder and Dwight Zscheile state, “triune God is a missionary God who sends the church into the world. God’s mission in the world is related to the reign (kingdom) of God. The missional church is an incarnational ministry sent to engage a postmodern, post-Christendom and globalized context.”¹¹ The internal life of the missional church focuses on every believer living as a disciple engaging in missional leadership.

Moreover, a systematic theologian Martin Kahler also said, “God is the initiator of mission, ‘*missio Dei*’ and mission is the mother of all theology.”¹² Therefore, leaders

⁹ David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shift in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 399.

¹⁰ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 118.

¹¹ Craig Van Gelder and Dwight J. Zscheile, *The Missional Church in Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 4.

¹² Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 16, quoted in Martin Kahler, *Schriften zur Christologie and Mission* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1971), 190.

who discern the nature of the church as *missio Dei* can shape their leadership strategy as a missional leader to help engage people to become disciples of God. A missional leader is a leader who has profound understanding on the nature and the context of the church.

Summary

In this chapter, the researcher presented the theoretical lenses that may be best appropriate for cultivating contextual leadership in the congregations. We now move on to the next chapter, which engages with the biblical and theological lenses of this project. It presents a basic implementation for exploring contextual leadership within the congregation from different biblical and theological perspectives.

CHAPTER FOUR

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL LENSES

The previous chapter presented a brief discussion about selected theoretical lenses that may be most appropriate for exploring contextual leadership within a newly founded immigrants churches in the US. This chapter engages with biblical and theological lenses to find out relevant contextual leadership for the congregation.

Biblical Lenses

There are several lenses in the Bible that can be quoted for this project. However, in this limited sub-topic, we will pick some primary lenses that related to the project such as the leadership concept of Moses and Jethro, the selection of deacons in Acts chapter six, Jesus and the Samaritan woman, and love and compassion from the Bible.

The Leadership of Moses: Creating Spaces for Others

The leadership concept of Moses from Exodus chapter 18 becomes the oldest model for leadership in the biblical narratives. As a leader, Moses was consistently occupied with resolving disputes and problems of his people. He became the only judge who was able to solve all the problems and cases of the Hebrews in the wilderness. He had to listen and judge all the disputes of the Hebrews on a daily basis. When Moses was

judging every dispute of the Hebrews, Jethro, his father-in-law, advised him to change his leadership style and appoint a committee of leaders to help him solve the daily disputes of the Hebrews. Moses accepted the advice of Jethro and appointed other leaders to settle the cases and disputes on his behalf. Moses abandoned top-down leadership practice and applied bottom-up leadership practice by creating spaces for others in the leadership role. In the book of Proverbs 15:22, we read that “Plans failed for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.” Contextual leadership encourages leaders to accept advice and humble themselves to allow spaces for others to participate in the leadership role.

Contextual leadership collects every available resource from within and outside the organization. In this rapidly changing world, we need to collect every available source to create spaces for others to participate in the organization. Wheatley wisely encourages us that:

Information must be actively sought from everywhere, from place and sources people never thought to look before, and then it must calculate freely so that many people can interpret it. The intent of this new information is to keep the system off-balance, alert to how it might need to change.¹

This leadership encourages leaders to connect with individuals to the identity of the organization to accept responsibility of changing themselves, rather than imposing change by a top-down hierarchy wielding rule. In this leadership practice, organization or congregation becomes the place where leaders practice “bottom-up” leadership style which allows everyone to participate in achieving new creativity for the development of the organization.

¹ Margaret J. Wheatley, *Leadership and the New Science: Discovering Order in a Chaotic World* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., 2006), 83.

The Selection of Deacons in Acts Chapter Six

The selection of deacons we see in Acts chapter 6 is also associated with the leadership style of Moses and Jethro. The Apostles selected seven other men to serve the tables and care for the widows. As a result, the Apostles were able to have enough time to concentrate on the Word of God for effective spiritual leadership. That is to say, the Apostles abandoned their old leadership style by creating spaces for other people to participate in a wider leadership role.

Wheatley also states, “We may have time to ‘let go or abandon’ what doesn’t work and see the world anew.”² Leaders need to have the abilities to differentiate major and minor responsibility in order to attain effective leadership. On the other hand, there may be the hidden powerful soul that the leader needs to cultivate for the success of the organizational leadership, as Bolman and Deal state: “Soul is the secret of success,” and “Team building at its heart is spiritual undertaking.”³ The spirit became an essential element in this performance as Bolman and Deal state, “The essence of high performance is spirit.”⁴ This spirit means motivation, inspiration, encouragement, and cultivating the talents of every individual in the organization to achieve the goal of the organization. It is the individual hidden power that we motivated becomes combined energy for the success of every secular or religious organization in the world. It is what Bolman and Deal called

² Wheatley, *Leadership and the New Science*, 7.

³ Lee G. Bolman and Terrence E. Deal, *Reframing Organizations* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2013), 239.

⁴ Ibid.

“putting the right people in the right structure of the organization.”⁵ People with different abilities and talents make up the organization or congregation and achieved its goals.

Jesus and the Samaritan Woman

As Christian mission has no boundary in the world, contextual leadership has no restriction for leading people for achieving the goals of the organization. A leader allows every single person in the organization to share their respective talents in the leadership role of the organization regardless of their skin color, religion, social, and educational background. Jesus’ engagement with the Samaritan woman destroyed the social and religious boundaries that blocked the relationship between the Jews and the Samaritans (John 4:4-26). Jesus bridged the gaps of all social and religious classes of the Jews and the Samaritans. This, in fact, made Jesus a great leader of his time. Contextual leadership on the other hand, is to reach people from every corner as Jesus aims to reach out to people who are outside the boundary or the wall of the church. The incarnation and the resurrection also show that Jesus is a great leader beyond the boundary made by people and even the natural law. Accordingly, Zscheile also asserts, “Evangelism means discovering people where they are and letting them know God’s presence, movement, and calling in their daily lives to become the disciples of Jesus.”⁶ Discipleship means learning from Jesus and collaborating together and using the spiritual gift that God has equipped with us. Again, Zscheile succinctly states, “If God meets us where we are, the

⁵ Lee G. Bolman and Terrence E. Deal, *Reframing Organizations* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2013), 239.

⁶ Dwight J. Zscheile, *The Agile Church* (New York: Morehouse Publishing, 2014), 4.

church, too, is led by the Spirit to meet its neighbors where they are in a posture of learning, reciprocity, and vulnerability.”⁷

Contextual leadership is about paying attention to God and participating in what God is doing and opening space for others to work with us. Congregational leadership, on the other hand, came from the basic idea that the church’s mission flows from her union with the God, who is on a mission. God is present and always at work, as Jesus affirmed (John 5:19), so contextual leadership simply pays attention to what God is already doing. After we perceive what God is doing in the world then we participate in the mission work of God. So, it is most important to note that our participation should be coherent with the way in which God is doing his work. We are not to take over or do whatever comes into our minds to do. Rather, we learn to participate in God’s work in God’s way in which we ultimately understand the context by looking at the way Christ went about his work.

Love and Compassion

In the Bible, we can see “love” as one aspect of missional leadership: “For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son” (John 3:16). The unconditional love of God the Father sent His only begotten Son to save the world. God the Father showed how He loved the world through sending His only Son to the world in human form. In other words, the triune God incarnates as a human form to show His love (*agape*) to the world regardless of human sins, color, and race.

⁷ Ibid., 36.

In the book of Jeremiah, we read, “The Lord appeared from afar saying, ‘I have loved you with an everlasting love. I have drawn you with unfailing kindness’” (Jeremiah 31:3). Hosea also writes about the love of God, “I led them with cords of a human kindness with ties of love. To them I was like one who lifts a little child to the cheek, and I bent down and fed them” (Hosea 11:4). Contextual missional leadership is leading people not by force nor power but by love, the love (*agape*) that is based on the triune God. David Bosch also writes, “Mission is an activity of the triune God and there is mission because God loves people.”⁸

Contextual leadership is not only about leading people who love us but also about loving people as they are. It is about loving even our enemy by the love (*agape*) of God. Jesus reminds us in Mathew 5:46 that, “If you love those who love you, what rewards will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that.?” This is what we called reaching other people beyond the Christian boundaries and the wall of the congregation in leadership role of the church. A contextual leadership engages the congregation to discern God’s love that already exists in the community outside the church. According to Roxburgh, “If you want to discover and discern what God is up in the world, enter the neighborhoods and communities where you live. Sit at the table of the others, and there you may begin to hear what God is doing there.”⁹ Besides, the apostle Paul was involved in creating spaces to engage people who were outside the Christian faith. He went into

⁸ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission* (Mary Knoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2016), 402.

⁹ Alan J. Roxburgh, *Missional: Joining God in the Neighborhood* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 134.

their temples, cities, theaters, and other public arenas to listen and engage them that the “unknown god” is the true God whom he is proclaiming to the world (Acts 17:23).

Contextual leadership is about compassion, caring for those who need help both within and outside of the organization. Matthew writes how Jesus’ compassion moved him to serve the hungry people: “When Jesus saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd” (Matthew 9: 35-36). It is the suffering of the Father who is giving up his own Son (Romans 8:32). Jürgen Moltmann also writes about God’s passionate suffering that “God made our suffering as his own.”¹⁰ Contextual leadership engages people to have deep passion for others and dare to suffer for other people they are leading.

Theological Lenses

The researcher uses four theological lenses for exploring effective contextual leadership for this research. The lenses are contextual theology, the sending and social trinity, liberation, and authority.

Contextual Theology

Stephen B. Bevans, in his book *Models of Contextual Theology* defines contextual theology as “an attempt to understand Christian faith in terms of a particular context.” This becomes a meaningful theological imperative for us.¹¹ Contextual theology seeks to understand the nature of theology in a new way. However, classic theology conceived

¹⁰ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 24.

¹¹ Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis books, 2003), 3.

theology as a kind of objective science of faith and understood there to be two *loci theologici* (theological sources): scripture and tradition (the content of which does not change). Classic theology is therefore above culture or being historically conditioned. However, contextual theology acknowledges those two *loci theologici*, then adds another: present human experience—or context.¹² Again, Bevans quoted Charles Kraft’s saying for more understanding:

God, the author of reality, exists outside any culture. Human beings, on the other hand, are always bound by cultural, subcultural, and psychological conditioning to perceive and interpret what they see of reality in ways appropriate to these conditionings.¹³

There are various kinds of theology that are concealed by their respective cultural and social context of that time. Likewise, Bevans also states that “Every authentic theology has been very much rooted in a particular context.”¹⁴ However, that authentic theology, rooted in a particular context or time, may not be authentic for a different people with different context. Contextual theology is a theology that contextualizes that authentic theology rooted in its old own context into the new context with different people.

Moreover, Bevans states, “to be Christian, means to be faithful to the Christian Tradition. But that had fidelity given the plurality of the tradition has to be a creative one or contextualized one.” This also means for Bevans that theologians should distinguish tradition from traditionalism and strive to transform tradition into a new context.

¹² Ibid., 4.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, 7.

Contextual theology should take the local context seriously but not without critically offering an alternative.¹⁵ The Chin people in the US, who came from Burma, also had their own old tradition of the old land, that should be contextualized accordingly to the context of the new land, the United States. Besides, Bevans argues that theology should not be simply seen as an intellectual understanding but intelligent action or response, engaging in the act of doing theology as a conversation.¹⁶ Because of the different culture and language barriers, the Chin people in the US seldom had relationship or connection with their neighboring people. As Bevans argues, they will not be able to cultivate contextualization without conversation with the native people of the new land.

The Sending and Social Trinity

God sends Jesus into the world with a special commission. The theme of God's sending Jesus on a special mission occurs in the four gospels in various ways. The affirmation is made in the direct statements (John 8:42; 11:42) and indirectly through Jesus' references to his Father as the one who sent him (5:24, 30). The sending does not stop with Jesus. Both the Father and the Son send the Paraclete (14:26; 15:26). Additionally, Jesus sends the disciples (13:20a) who, along with the Paraclete, continue the mission just as John the Baptist was sent to inaugurate it (3:28). This threefold sending of John the Baptist, Jesus, and the disciples-Paraclete serves to incorporate "sending" into the flow of the gospel and to highlight its importance.

¹⁵ Ibid., 69.

¹⁶ Ibid.

The act of sending includes a special commission of the task to establish God's kingdom, as a religious nature in the world. As John the Baptist is sent to bear witness to the true light (1:6-7), Jesus also is sent to bear witness to the true light (1:6-7), and the disciples and Paraclete are sent to perform tasks that continue the mission of Jesus (17:18; 15:26). These missions are often related to the revelation of the sender (3:34; 8:26) and the redemption of the ones to whom the agent is sent (3:17). Sometimes a dualistic view of the world serves as the context and makes the sending significant (10:36; 17:18a).

This "sending" is related to the idea that the God above is related to the world below through Christ as the one sent. Here, we see that "sending" symbolizes the doctrine of revelation. According to the gospel of John, there is only one possible way to gain knowledge of the invisible Father when the Father himself sends someone with the knowledge. Jesus is the emissary or representative sent to reveal the Father and the things above. He stands for the Father in the world and is the visible expression of the invisible Father (cf. Col 1:15). In Jesus as the one sent the world hears God speaking and sees God working.

The Christological basis of this revelation of God is expressed in several ways. The revelation in Christ is expressed in terms of *logos*, "word" (1:14). "The word became flesh" (John 1:1). The triune God incarnates as the Son of man Jesus. Moltmann states, "The incarnation of the Son God himself fulfills the promise made to human kind and people become co-opted sons and daughters of the Father."¹⁷ Through the incarnation, the

¹⁷ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 121.

Son and trinitarian relationship of the Son, the Father, and the Holy Spirit, people in the world simultaneously exist “in God” and “God in them.” One important aspect of trinitarian relationship to the world is to engage people to live as children of God and building relationships through communication, conversing with one another.

In this conversation process, all are regarded as equal for the organization and social settings and even the marginalized people can have equal voice in relation for building a fair and just society. This conversation also leads the team to unity as Moltmann developed a social doctrine of Holy Trinity whose, “unity is constituted by mutual indwelling and reciprocal interpretation.”¹⁸

Liberation

Liberation theology developed as a result of a systematic, disciplined reflection on Christian faith and its implications. It is worth noting that the theologians who formulated liberation theology mostly do not teach in the so-called universities and seminaries. They are a small group of Catholic or Protestant clergy who have direct contact with the grass-roots groups as advisors to priests, sisters, or pastors. Since they spend at least some time working directly with the poor themselves, the questions they deal with arise out of their direct contact with the poor based on the context. Liberation theology interprets the Bible and the key Christian doctrines through the experiences of the poor. It also helps the poor to interpret their own faith in a new way. It deals with Jesus' life and message. Jesus let

¹⁸ Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, viii.

them . . . see the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead raised and the Gospel is preached to the poor (Luke 7:22).

The poor learn to read the Scripture in a way that affirms their dignity and their right to struggle together for a more decent life. The poverty of people is largely a product of the way society is organized, therefore liberation theology is a "critique of economic structures." Phillip Berryman in his book titled *Liberation Theology* described liberation theology in the following terms: "An interpretation of Christian faith out of the suffering, struggle, and hope of the poor, a critique of society and the ideologies sustaining it and a critique of the activity of the church and of Christians from the angle of the poor."¹⁹ The Church has the duty to proclaim the liberation of human beings whom are her own children and interrelated to evangelization.

Moreover, the aim of liberation theology is to find its embodiment in the Christian ecclesial base communities. They are small, lay-led groups of Christians that see themselves as part of the Church and work together to improve their lot and establish a more just society. Liberation must be inserted into the entire contemporary reality of human life and is a faith reality, one of the basic biblical themes, deeply inscribed in the salvific mission of Christ, in the work of redemption, and in his teaching. At the same time, contextual leadership, on the other hand, is based on exploring the contemporary reality of human life for a just and effective leadership for the organization.

¹⁹ Phillip Berryman, *Liberation Theology: Essential Facts about the Revolutionary Movement in Latin America and Beyond* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1987), 156.

Authority

The concept of authority related to contextual leadership. How are decisions made about doctrine and practice in the church based on the context of the people? In the early pioneer context of the church, who decides? Theoretically, the answer is local believers. Early literature on contextualization was questioned for overemphasizing the missionary's role. However, nowadays, there is welcome sensitivity to issues of power and process in the leadership of the church.

Contextual leadership puts emphasis on the processes of biblical reflection and theologizing in the new faith communities, based on the latter's own understanding for a given point in time—of the word of God. Let them read the Bible and sense the Spirit, and leave them alone with or without a little coaching then they will work it out. Henry and Richard Blackaby, co-authors of the book titled *Spiritual Leadership*, also point out that “the main reason why leader's failure in leadership is their negligence to have deep relationship with God.”²⁰

The Bible reveals how the pioneer acknowledged the power of the Holy Spirit for getting things done miraculously in their daily lives. Likewise, contextual leadership makes sense people the innovation of the Holy Spirit that let them work it out themselves without the coaching of other people in their daily living. Accordingly, contextual leadership is based on the theological concept of “priesthood of all believers.” All recognize local assemblies are growing toward maturity. The local autonomy and the

²⁰ Henry Blackaby and Richard Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership* (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2011), 222.

right and responsibility of every single person is highly recognized, but Scripture becomes the final authority for faith and practice in the church. Thomas G. Bandy in his book *Spirited Leadership: Empowering People to Do What Matters* also asserts that “All concepts and plans must be measured in reference to Scriptures, the practice of the early church, sound analysis, and openness to the fresh existence of the Holy Spirit”.²¹

Contextual leadership tends to emphasize the local discovery and application of biblical truth, while the other side adds the discernment and impairment of biblical truth (and warnings about error) by those who embody the Church’s teaching ministry. According to Henry and Richard Blackaby, “The main task of leadership is to influence God’s people toward God’s purpose or biblical truth.”²² The purpose is to utilize “discovery” method in which the broader Church, through its mission to the nations, functions today as a faithful “steward of the mysteries of God” (1 Cor. 4:1). Leaders draw energy and their very identity from apostolic mandates to “command and teach these things” (Col. 4:11) and “admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, and accordingly to the context, so that all may present everyone perfect in Christ” (Col. 1:28-29). It is the wisdom of God that leads leaders to make a sound decision based on the context of the people they are leading.

²¹ Thomas G. Bandy, *Spirited Leadership: Empowering People to Do What Matters* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2007), 54.

²² Blackaby and Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership*, 32.

Summary

We have explored some biblical and theological lenses in this chapter. We now move to the next step of research methodology: the research questions and methodology, research site, data collection, and interviews. The lenses in this chapter provide the foundation for research methodology in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Chapter four presented biblical and theological lenses to explore effective contextual leadership for leaders of the congregations. This chapter presents the research methodology and design. As already mentioned in the purpose of the study in chapter one, exploratory case study research was employed as a research methodology in this research. This chapter explains the stages of selecting the participants, the congregation, and how the data collection process was done. It also explains the basic process of research design such as selection of the congregations, data collection, data analysis, research assistants, and ethical issues.

Research Question

The Chin people came to the United States from Myanmar where its people have many differences in social, culture, and worldview. As stated in the previous chapters, they began to establish Chin churches in many parts of the United States within a few years of their arrival in the US. There are over a hundred Chin churches under Chin Baptist Churches USA in 2019.¹ As immigrant people in a new land, they find it difficult

¹ Meeting Report from the General Secretary of CBC USA at the 16th Board of Trustees Meeting held on March 28, 2019. This meeting was hosted by Emmanuel Chin Baptist Church, Columbus, OH.

to adapt in many areas of their lives and church leadership became one of them. There are pastors who are educated, well-trained, and experienced in church leadership while in Myanmar. However, they are not well-equipped to lead the Chin churches in America, according to the context with new experiences and challenges. It is obvious that even a well-trained local American church leader who had experiences in the US context may be unqualified to lead the Chin churches because they have differences in context, world view, and experiences. A congregation that had established in the new land needs leaders who know contextual leadership within the new contexts.

We need leaders who would listen and participate in the daily experiences of the people to know the context of the people. We also need to listen deeply to what the community identified as challenges in life to cultivate effective contextual leadership. Again, we need to seek the barriers that prevented congregations from spiritual and physical maturity in Christ. Most importantly, we need to explore and define what appropriate action and leadership should be practiced in the congregation and the community for effective leadership. A research question emerges out of this context.

How might contextual leadership develop within Chin immigrant churches in the United States?

Research Methodology

The social science research methodology I utilized to research my question was exploratory case study research using qualitative data gathering from ground-based research. Robert K. Yin, in his book called *Case Study Research; Design and Method*, briefly defines how useful case study as:

A case study allows investigators to focus in a “case” and retain a holistic and real-world perspective such as in studying individual life cycles, small group behavior, organizational and managerial processes, neighborhood change, school performance, international relations, and the maturation of industries.²

In order to do a case study, a researcher needs to understand “a real-world case” where it is believed that it has important contextual conditions in the community that we should study for uplifting a better life. A researcher explores deeply into the real world and gathers all available data from the community to analyze the case. Exploring in the community through in-depth participation in the real life of the people will help the researcher to define a clear contextual based leadership for the community. Accordingly, Robert K. Yin clarifies the scope of case study:

A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the “case”) in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident.³

A case study or exploratory case study mostly relies on qualitative data gathering based on qualitative research. According to Tim Sensing, “Qualitative research based on the real social world experience and find to identify the real-life experience. It carefully finds the answers to questioning through observing various social settings and the individual people living in these settings.⁴ He also defines qualitative research by quoting the book of Denzin and Lincoln, *Handbook of Qualitative Research*:

Qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomenon in terms of the meanings people bring to them

² Yin, *Case Study Research*, 4.

³ Ibid., 16.

⁴ Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research: A Multi-methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Thesis* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2011), 57.

—Qualitative research involves the studies use and collection of a variety of materials—case study, personal experience, introspections; life story; interviews; artifacts; cultural texts—that describe routine and problematic moment and meanings in individuals’ lives. Accordingly, researchers deploy a wide range of interconnected interpretive practice hoping always to get a better understanding of the subject matter at hand.⁵

The book of “*Qualitative Interviewing*” written by Herbert J. Rubin and Irene S. Rubin also explain that “A naturalistic or qualitative researcher needs to explore complex situations and problems by applying many kinds of technique such as participant observation, documentary and conversational analysis and interview”.⁶ In this research, the researcher explored active participation in focus group with in-depth interview, personal interview with the chosen leaders from the research site, and electronic mail survey to some chosen pastors from CBC USA. The focus of this research is to explore contextual leadership, based on its real-world context through focus group, personal in-depth interview, and electronic mail survey.

Biblical and Theological Rationale for Methodology

The biblical and theological rationale for a case study approach can be found in Mark 6:7 and Luke 10:1, where Jesus sent out his disciples two by two. Jesus sent them out two by two and gave them authority over impure spirits (Mark 6:6-7), means; two people can provide a valid witness from what they saw and knew from the ground-based society, two people can help each and work together to overcome every challenge, and

⁵ Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 63.

⁶ Herbert J. Rubin and Irene S. Rubin, *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data*. 3rd ed. (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2012), 26.

supporting one another by twos. They will support one another in the things they witness, the teaching of Jesus, and the observation of many other things in the world. On the other hand, they will support one another when they return to Jesus witnessing what was happening in the real context, they visited. The main focus of sending two by two means supporting one another and working together to achieve a certain goal of the organization or fellowship. A case study research focuses on working together with other people to explore what is happening in the real context of the world for a certain purpose or project.

The book of Acts is, in essence, a story of the apostles utilizing a kind of case study research in sharing responsibility or power for doing the mission of God in more effective ways. The Apostles “turned the responsibilities (of the table) to them (the seven men) in order to give more attention to prayer and the ministry of the word” (Acts 6:3-4). Their ministry or journey was filled with new challenges and experiences but the Holy Spirit led them see the context of the people they were leading. The apostles came to see the importance of sharing responsibility or power for spreading the Gospel to both the Jews and the Gentiles. The chosen seven men gathered information about the people there and managed the table while the Apostle were praying and teaching the Gospel to the world. The apostles applied the best leadership practice that would best connect with the people. “So, the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith” (Act 6:7). This may not be perfect equivalence to case study, but for me, this shows that understanding the context prior to doing a research or data gathering required in any research.

In the book of Joshua chapter two, Joshua sent two men to spy Jericho city before they (Israelites) enter into the city. In other words, sending two men means studying the

real-world context as a kind of preparation for invading the land. The two men brought back a report of the state of things in Jericho and led them to discover the right path for the Israelites to enter the land. A case study, on the other hand, also is a kind of research study that is based on exploration and studying the context before doing a research. This is what we called collecting the contextual data that comes prior to planning action for this research. This is a discernment piece that I think will make the research the right choice for addressing my research question from a theological perspective.

Research Sites, Populations, and Research Design

The research design for this project consists of selection of the site, data collection, and the analysis of data in accordance with people and context. It also includes the importance of protecting my research.

Research Sites

The researcher chose one Chin immigrant church named Bethlehem Chin Baptist Church from Dallas for the focus group and individual interviews. The church is a nine-year-old Myanmar Chin immigrant church of 500 members and has two pastors. After the selection of the congregation, the researcher made a formal request to the church to allow him to do the research project with some of their members by sending an electronic letter to their senior pastors or church leaders. The researcher also made phone calls to their church leaders to explain the purpose of my research project and the importance of my

research. In order to conduct a focus group and research interviews, the researcher obtained an official permission from senior pastors of the church.⁷

With the help of the pastors and church leaders, the researcher selected twelve people from every department and fellowship leaders of the church, including women and youth leaders (20-65 ages), for the focus group. The researcher also selected another seven leaders, including the two pastors from the church, for personal interviews. Besides, the researcher also organized an email survey to some selected pastors from Chin Baptist Church USA (CBC USA). The researcher invited 4 senior pastors (55-65 ages) and 5 junior pastors (30-45 ages) from pastors of CBC USA. The number of participants in this electronic email survey was nine pastors. The researcher sent them questionnaires through electronic mail and requested them to return to him before the end of December 2019.⁸ All participants in the focus group, as well as the interviewees, have lived in the US for at least five years.

After selecting the sites and inviting all participants, the researcher met all the participants individually and explained to them the necessary clarification of the purpose and expectations of this research in order to confirm their willingness to participate in this research at their own will. In the same way, the researcher met with members of each focus group and explained the purpose and expectations of this study to them and determined their willingness to be part of this research. Then we scheduled the time and place of the meetings and interviews. In this project, I was the primary researcher. I chose

⁷ See appendix A.

⁸ See appendix C.

to do the research where I was an outsider. There are ethnic concerns when a researcher does interviews within his or her own community. Some people are afraid of being interviewed and being exposed. Thus, I had to explain the confidentiality of my research to all the participants carefully.

Research Design

After receiving approval from the Graduate Theological Education (GTE) office for my research proposal, I started the research in November of 2019. I requested the two pastors from Bethlehem Baptist Church to help me organize a focus group for intervention and personal interviewees for the research in the first week of December 2019.⁹ All of the leaders of the church, including women and youth leaders (20-35 ages) from the church, were invited for the focus group. All leaders were invited for the focus group but leaders who showed active response to the invitation were prioritized for the intervention and the interview. The number of participants was limited and special invitation to the selected people was made among deacons and women leaders to reach that limit because the volunteer number of participants required to meet the limit.

There were two formal group gatherings for the focus group with twelve participants and six personal interviews which functioned as the exploratory case study research.¹⁰ This interview utilized the principles of appreciative inquiry and communal discernment and experimentation with Christian understanding of leadership based on the

⁹ A request letter to Pastor can be found in appendix A.

¹⁰ Protocol question can be found in the appendix B.

context.¹¹ Following each focus group gathering, the pastors of Bethlehem Baptist Church helped me study the effectiveness of the focus group by gathering and providing feedback for the design and implementation of subsequent gatherings. There was an email survey to some selected pastors from Chin Baptist Churches United States of America (CBC USA). I invited four senior pastors (55-65 ages) and five junior pastors (30-45 ages) from CBCUSA. The number of participants in this electronic email survey were nine individuals. I sent them an implied consent letter for email survey¹², and questionnaires through electronic mail.¹³ I requested them to return answers for questionnaires to me before the end of December 2019.

Before focus group gatherings and personal interviews, the protocol, the questionnaires and electronic email survey questionnaires was field tested by two pastors from one Chin Baptist church in Dallas, TX. Besides, I also engaged in a primary analysis of the data, for further developing the goals and design of the subsequent interventions and keeping with case study design of the project before the research was started. I used Kathy Charmaz' ideas of open-ended interview questions in order to invite detailed discussion with the participants.¹⁴ Herbert J. Rubin and Irene S. Rubin also suggest that interview questions need to be organized in three main patterns: "main, follow-up, and probes." Rubin and Rubin also explain that the main questions are the

¹¹ Mathew Fifolt and Lori Lander, "Cultivating Changes Using Appreciative Inquiry; *New Directions for Student Services*' no. 143 (Fall 2013): 14.

¹² See appendix G.

¹³ See questionnaires in appendix C.

¹⁴ Kathy Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory*, 2nd ed. (London: Sage, 2014), 56-65.

frame of the interview, and their goal is to encourage the research participants to talk about their experiences, perceptions, and understandings.¹⁵ Following the above scholars' works, I raised the interview questions for the research. I created memos, handwritten notes, cell phone recorders, and audio or video recording throughout the process of conducting interviews and focus groups.

Data Collection

Individual interviews, participant observation in a focus group, and field notes were the three main sources for data collection in this project. Audio recording, virtual zoom recording, and note-taking accompany all the research work. Due to the pandemic (COVID-19) that swept all over the world in 2020, the researcher used virtual zoom for the second and final focus group meeting for the research. My notes helped me code the materials I had in the recorder (phone). I transcribed all the recorded conversations first in Chin language no later than one week after the focus group session and individual interviews. Then I translated them into English.

Interviews

In the book, *Interviewing: Principles and Practice*, Charles J. Stewart and William B. Cash, Jr. define interviewing in this way:

Interviewing is a process of dyadic, relational communication with a predetermined and serious purpose designed to interchange behavior and involving the asking and answering of questions. . . . It is a person-to-person

¹⁵ Herbert J. Rubin and Irene S. Rubin, *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data*, 3rd ed. (Los Angelis, CA: SAGE Publications, 2012), 6.

interaction with pervasive feedback between two parties that have a mutual connection and interest in the outcome.¹⁶

Warren and Karner label qualitative interviews as sometimes called the in-depth or intensive interviews, which centers on the meanings that life experiences hold for the individuals being interviewed. Such interviews typically involve one interviewer and one respondent, but forms include the focus group, in which one interviewer questions more than one respondent.¹⁷ The first data stream of this project comes from in-depth interviews to individuals as one on-one interviews and focus group interviews.

The primary purpose of these interviews is to establish the insiders' worldviews and their view of reality, "an emic perspective."¹⁸ An emic perspective is necessary in a qualitative study to understand how members in a particular church perceive the world around them. Therefore, I employed this method by asking the research participants open-ended questions and questions about how things work from their perspective.¹⁹ Conducting these interviews helped me discover the rich and diverse perspectives from the participants' lived experiences and stories starting from Myanmar to the U.S.

For the actual interviews, Kathy Charmaz advises devising a few broad, open-ended questions in order to invite detailed discussion with the participants.²⁰ Herbert J.

¹⁶ Charles J. Stewart and William B. Cash, Jr., *Interviewing: Principles and Practices* (Dubuque: WCB Publishers, 1988), 3-4.

¹⁷ Carol A. B. Warren and Tracy Xavia Karner, *Discovering Qualitative Methods: Field Research, Interviews, and Analysis*, 2nd ed. (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 127.

¹⁸ David M. Fetterman, "Emic/Ethnic Distinction," in the *SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*, ed. Lisa M. Given (Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications, 2008), 249.

¹⁹ Fetterman, *Emic/Ethnic Distinction*.

²⁰ Kathy Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis* (Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications, 2006), 26.

Rubin and Irene S. Rubin also suggest that interview questions need to be organized in three main patterns: “main, follow-up, and probes.” Rubin and Rubin explain that the main questions are the skeleton of the interview, and their purpose is to encourage the research participants to talk about their experiences, perceptions, and understandings.²¹ Following the above prominent scholars’ works, I organized twenty-one questions in each personal interview.²²

In in-depth interviews for data collection, it is important to note firstly that poor listening will lose important information, which can also fail to motivate the other party to respond, express feelings, listen, and interact. With this in mind, I followed Stewart and Cash’s three approaches to effective listening.

1) Listening for comprehension: This approach is primarily a method of receiving content and requires little or no feedback from the listener. The purpose is to understand and remain objective, not to critically analyze each question, answer, or reaction.

2) Listening with empathy: The method of responding beyond merely receiving messages. It tells the other party that you understand his or her concerns and limitations. Empathic listening is total response, not a series of principles. It reassures, comforts, and expresses warmth. It is the ability to put oneself in the situation of the other party.

²¹ Herbert J. Rubin and Irene S. Rubin, *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2005), 134-35.

²² See appendix B.

3) Listening for evaluation: The methods of comprehension and empathy are critical because the researcher is not ready to judge information until he or she has comprehended it. Thus, listening carefully to the entire question and response before making any conclusion is crucial. Instead of making judgment, the researcher must rather observe all verbal and nonverbal clues and nuances in order to obtain a clear idea of how to proceed.²³

Focus Group

I conducted the first focus group with twelve participants who have lived in the US at least five years. The first gathering of the focus group, the researcher briefly introduced himself and the purpose of the focus group that followed by opening payer. After that, each participant introduced themselves to one another, described a time when they believe the church was at its best in leadership and management, named what leadership practices the church is practicing today, and named wishes and ideas they have about church's leadership practices. The purpose of this gathering was to engage congregation leaders in the positive aspects of ministry at BBC and begin to understand the gifts and passions that the Holy Spirit has equipped each leader for effective congregational leadership. I also requested each of the participants to think more about which leadership practices are most relevant for BBC and present it to the next gathering of the focus group. The number of participants was twelve. This event took place in the last week of February 2020.

²³ Stewart and Cash, *Interviewing: Principles and Practices*, 27-28.

The second gathering of the focus group focused on communal discernment on how each member came to relate what they had discussed in the previous gathering to communal life within BBC. This gathering began with engaging dwelling in the Word, based on a particular passage and engaging in conversation about that passage, the learnings from the previous gathering, and the sense of God's calling for the future leadership practices of BBC. Each pair (paired with two by two) presented their responses to the group based on the protocol, where further conversation, discernment, and findings helped develop answers for the research questions. Moreover, the researcher also presented another three sub-topics: (a) Technical problems versus adaptive challenges, (b) Spiritual and physical health of leaders and (c) How they understood contextual leadership as applicable for leaders of Chin Churches in the US, for further discussion in the group. The goal was to cultivate effective contextual leadership practices for Chin churches in the US, based on the findings of the focus group protocol, personal interview, and email survey. The number of participants was ten. This event took place in the second week of March 2020.

The third meeting of focus group was done through virtual zoom because of the pandemic COVID-19 that swept global economics and locked down people into their respective homes in the US since the first week of April 2020. In order to prevent the spread of virus among people, churches were closed, all indoor or outdoor social gatherings were prohibited in the US until the end of August 2020. So, the researcher used virtual zoom, the only available recourse for the third and final virtual meeting of the focus group for the research.

The meeting began with personal testimony from each participant: how they sensed God's providence in the midst of pandemic before the opening prayer offered by the researcher. The purpose of this final gathering was asking the participants questions about what they learned from the previous gatherings and finding the most appropriate answers for the focus group protocols. All of the participants in this focus group expressed how they were blessed to be part of this research and shared with the group what they learned from the focus group. The number of participants in this virtual meeting was nine. This meeting was done in the second week of August 2020.

For the second data source, Warner and Karner comment that focus groups offer a data collection strategy that allows for the involvement of a larger sample in a shorter amount of time.²⁴ I also found that focus groups have some advantages over individual interviews in terms of time and expenses. They allowed the participants to exchange their experiences and make comments to one another. According to Marshall and Rossman, focus groups are "socially oriented, studying participants in an atmosphere more natural rather than artificial experimental circumstances and more relaxed than a one-to-one interview."²⁵ Participants in my focus group were members of Bethlehem Baptist Church and quite familiar with their church program and mission. I utilized some vivid different research questions for individual interviews.²⁶ I transcribed the research interview notes

²⁴ Warner and Karner, *Discovering Qualitative Methods*, 139.

²⁵ Catherine Marshall and Gretchen B. Rossman, *Designing Qualitative Research*, 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2006), 114.

²⁶ See appendix B.

from the focus groups and individuals first into Chin in detail and then into English in summary.

Participant Observation and Field Notes

Participant observation and field note writing is my third method for data collection. This is a study of people in their daily lives. According to Robert M. Emerson, Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw, this method involves two distinct activities. First, the researcher enters into a social setting and gets to know the people involved in it. The researcher participates in the daily routines of the setting, develops ongoing relations with the people in it, and observes all the while what is going on. Second, the researcher writes down in regular, systematic ways what she observes and learns while participating in the daily rounds of life of others.²⁷ They further explain that field notes provide the primary means for deeper appreciation of how field researchers come to grasp and interpret the actions and concerns of others. Field notes also offer subtle and complex understandings of these others' lives, routines, and meanings. Furthermore, the distinctive and unique features of these field notes brought forward into the final analysis, create texture and variation, avoiding the flatness that comes from generality.²⁸

I participated as solely a participant observer at Bethlehem Baptist Church in their main worship service on Sunday, in youth meeting on Saturday night, and other activities such as choir practice and football game, and women fellowship worship service on

²⁷ Robert M. Emerson, Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw, *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes* (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), 1.

²⁸ Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw, *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*, 13.

Sunday night. As a case study researcher, the researcher observes the participants' daily lives and tried to understand what is going on within their own spiritual, social, and cultural settings in the new land.

Data Analysis

Some suggest that data analysis begins as soon as there is data collection. But more practically, Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw suggest that after weeks or perhaps months of writing notes, the researcher must shift gears and turn to the written record he or she produced with an eye to transforming this collection of materials into writings that speak to wider, outside audiences.²⁹ Robert S. Weiss reminds us of the heavy task of data analysis after the long process of data collection:

During the interviewing phase the investigator must deal with all the demands of obtaining the data: recruiting the respondents, conducting the interviews, getting them transcribed, deciding whether the right information is being collected, and returning to conduct more interviews. Nor can the investigator escape awareness that when the interviewing is over, not only will all the data be at hand but there will be uninterrupted weeks or months available for their analysis.³⁰

Data analysis is one last part of the qualitative research method. Swinton and Mowat define:

Data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the complicated mass of qualitative data that the researcher generates during the research process. It concerns the way in which interviews, text, reflexive diaries and all of the other data is collected and collated by the research. Analysis is a

²⁹ Ibid., 142.

³⁰ Robert S. Weiss, *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies* (New York: The Free Press, 1995), 151.

process of breaking down the data and thematizing it in ways that draw out the meanings hidden within the text.³¹

More accurately, Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw explain the ethnographic coding in this way:

Qualitative analytic coding usually proceeds in two different phases. In open coding, the ethnographer reads field notes line-by-line to identify and formulate any and all ideas, themes, or issues they suggest, no matter how varied and disparate. In focused coding, the field worker subjects field notes to fined-grained, line-by-line analysis on the basis of topics that have been identified as of particular interest. Here, the ethnographer uses a smaller set of promising ideas and categories to provide the major topic and themes for the final ethnography.³²

Two essential steps were done in this process: coding and memo-writing. In qualitative research, coding is the process of generating ideas and concepts from raw data such as interview transcripts, field notes, archival materials, reports, newspapers articles, and art.³³ Memo writing is simply the act of recording reflective notes about what the researcher was learning from the data and research experience. It occurs during and after data collection, as researchers take note of personal, conceptual, or theoretical ideas or reflections that come to mind.³⁴

With the tools of memo writing and coding, I worked on the findings of my research among immigrant leaders of the church, as we shall reveal them in the next chapter. I have been a pastor of the Chins for twelve years in Myanmar and an immigrant

³¹ John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 2nd ed. (London: SCM Press, 2006), 54.

³² Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw, *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*, 143.

³³ Lucia Benaquisto, "Codes and Coding," in *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*, ed. Lisa M. Given (Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications, 2008), 85.

³⁴ Deborah K. vanden Hoonard and Will C. vanden Hoonard, "Data Analysis," in *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*, ed. Lisa M. Given (Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications, 2008), 186.

part-time pastor of the Chins for the past three years working with many pastors and lay leaders in the US. These experiences helped me to better understand the lives and experiences and to be able to deal with them pastorally. The next paragraph is the goal of my whole research project in this thesis.

Significance

Academically, this project will be the first unique resource in the field of contextual pastoral leadership for Chin Christians both inside and outside the country, as there is no other case study research done among the Chin immigrant churches in the US. It may be an important contribution to the present Chin pastors and churches in the US as they can reflect on it according to their lived-out experience in their daily ministry. They may be able to use these materials for their further research and practice. This work may also be of interest to scholars from Asia and other ethnic groups who have the same immigration experience in their community.

Emerging church leaders from all over the world may find it useful for reflection, as my method of research is exploratory case study, which is widely recognized in the field of contextual research. It may also be of interest as a resource of knowledge for pastors or lay leaders, who live, serve, and work together with the immigrant community. My work may also help people find out how case study research functions in different cultures. Finally, the project may help all immigrant church leaders in the US in some way to better offer effective church leadership to their members and equip them with contextual leadership skills.

Ethical Issues

The researcher recognized the importance of ethical issues, which were directly or indirectly involved in this research, and he anticipated such issues to arise during his research. He also recognized that research interviews could expose individuals' thoughts and beliefs. The researcher considered the participants' interests rather than his own. In order to guard against unintended clues to participants' identities, he followed through the Institutional Review Board (IRB) process at Luther Seminary and conformed to its requirements by using pseudonyms for the selected congregations and for all participants in this research, including one for his research assistants.

The main goal of ethical concern is to respect the privacy and rights of the participant. Therefore, the researcher applied the following procedures to protect the privacy and rights of his research participants. First, the researcher sent an introductory letter regarding the purpose of the research, the interview schedule and time, site, and purpose of the interview at least a week before the actual event. Next, he asked permission from the participants to record with video and audio in the interviews and focus group gathering.

In order to best protect the privacy and rights of each participant, the researcher asked each participant to sign an informed consent form before engaging in the actual research.³⁵ After signing the consent form, it was assumed that the researcher owned the data. The recordings of the interviews, the field notes, and transcripts from the focus

³⁵ See in appendix E.

groups will be destroyed three years after the researcher has defended his research. The researcher did not force his research participants to participate in his research project in any way. They were co-researchers of the research process whom both are benefited from the research. The research participants had the right to withdraw from this research at any time during the research process. The researcher attempted not to use biased language based on gender, racial, and ethnic issues. The researcher also used inclusive terms and views for each individual participant as co-researchers and respected them equally when he wrote about the research.

IRB Requirements and Ethical Concerns

Conformation to Institutional Review Board (IRB) Standards and Ethical Concerns

As this research project was a case study research project, one area of ethical concern was my own participation, both as researcher and participant in the research. I made good use of coding, journaling, and memos to certify that my analysis of the data was as unbiased as possible, and that the outcomes did not easily conform to my hopes and ideas for conclusions.

All the instruments for the research were field tested with two pastors and one deacon from one Chin Baptist Church in Dallas, Texas. The core of my research was the questionnaires, focus group interviews, and personal interviews, but the participants themselves brought their respective insight and congregation's attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors into the focus group and the interview. It was kept in mind that every participant in the focus group was made aware and I, as the researcher, was an observer of the events. I did not use individual statements in the final report so that these events

served to help in the interpretation of the data that were collected from the questionnaires and focus groups. Therefore, participants were clearly informed that by participating, they were research subjects for the research. I followed the Internal Review Board (IRB) process at Luther Seminary and conformed to its requirements by using pseudonyms for the selected congregation, all participants in this research, and the research assistants.

No sensitive information was discussed or collected as part of this research, and participation was completely optional. There were no benefits or rewards for those who participated. The researcher explained to his participants that once the participants signed the consent form, it was assumed that the researcher owned the data.³⁶ The recordings of the interviews, the field notes, and transcripts from the focus groups session will be destroyed three years after the researcher has defended his dissertation. Again, all the audio and paper records of this study will be kept confidential. All data will be kept in a locked file in the researcher's computer; only my advisors, Daniel Anderson, Alvin Luedke, and the researcher will have access to the data. If the research is terminated for any reason, all data and recordings will be destroyed.

Research Assistants

The researcher asked Joseph to help him as research assistant in his focus group interviews by observing and note taking.³⁷ Joseph gladly showed his interest in

³⁶ See appendix F.

³⁷ Joseph (a pseudonym) came to America more than ten years ago, to live with his parents, and received a green card after his arrival to the US. He had earned his bachelor's degree from a seminaries in Chin State, Burma before pursuing his M.Div. degree in the US. He served as a youth pastor at the time this research was done. Joseph is an active young pastor who can work co-operatively with both young and elder leaders of Chin churches in the US.

congregational leadership of Chin immigrant churches and the research of contextual leadership based on case study research. He agreed to serve as the researcher's assistant and helped organizing and note taking for the focus group.

The researcher also asked Deborah to help him edit and proof read for his writing, since English became his third language.³⁸ Deborah has a master's degree in social science from a university in the US and is experienced in English writing like native English speaker as well. The researcher also consulted with an English editor from the seminary's Center of Writing and Research.

Summary

We have explained the research methodology and design in this chapter. We now move to the next step of this research, which describes the research findings and interpretation of individual interviews, electronic mail survey, and focus group. This chapter provides the foundation for a systematic analysis of the research findings in the next chapter.

³⁸ Deborah (a pseudonym) came to the US when she was ten years old, along with her mother from Burma to join her father who arrived in the US via Guam as an asylum seeker. Deborah started her education from third grade in the U.S. and earned a master degree from a university in the U.S.

CHAPTER SIX

RESULTS OF STUDY AND DATA ANALYSES

Chapter one has explained why the research question was raised and how the researcher organized the individual interviews, electronic mail survey, and focus group sessions. Chapter four also laid out the methodology of the research and described the nature and process of the research design. It also explained how the data were collected from each interviewee, electronic mail survey, and the focus group. This chapter presents a brief narrative of personal interviewees, the selected leaders that sent electronic mail surveys, and the focus group of leaders from the selected research site, BBC.

Firstly, this chapter introduces a brief narrative of participants based on the personal interviews, electronic mail survey group, and the nature of the focus group. Secondly, it discusses the emerging themes from the interviews, electronic mail survey, and focus group by using tables to compare and contrast the data. Thirdly, it takes into account the expectations of the members about the church and Chin community for further reflection in the next chapter.

The Participants

There are three groups of participants in this research: personal interviewees and focus group from the selected research site, and electronic mail survey group from selected pastors from some Chin Baptist Churches in the US.

Personal Interviewees

The researcher selected five personal interviewees from different committees and department leaders, and pastors of the research site.

1. Interviewee One: Pastor Paul¹

Pastor Paul is the senior pastor of the research site I selected. He has been the senior pastor since the church was organized ten years ago. Prior to the research, I wrote an invitation letter asking Pastor Paul for permission for me to utilize their church as my research site.² In addition to asking for permission, I invited him to be one of my personal interviewees for the research to which he willingly accepted.³ The interview took place in the senior pastor's office, located inside the church. With the help of their church's office secretary, we were given a quiet space to have a private interview. Coffee and snacks were provided to us. We met twice and each meeting took approximately one and a half hours. Pastor Paul has been serving as a senior pastor for more than ten years in the

¹ The researcher uses pseudonyms for all the interviewees of this research.

² See appendix A.

³ See appendix H.

church. He was seventy years old during the time of this interview. He is still very active as if he were in his fifties.

Pastor Paul has two daughters, two sons, and four grandchildren, from his two daughters. He was previously a senior pastor of a Baptist church from Chin State, Myanmar. He had more than twenty years of pastoral experience from Chin state. He also served as a full-time secretary of the youth department and full-time general secretary for one of the Baptist associations in Chin state for six years. He also had three years of experience leading the Chin Baptist conventions as a part-time vice president. He was one of the resource persons for leadership and management in the field of pastoral leadership. He facilitated many trainings among the Baptist churches in Chin State.

Pastor Paul arrived in the US as an asylum seeker via Guam. There were many Chins in the island of Guam at the time Pastor Paul arrived and he automatically became a volunteer pastor for the Chins in Guam. He organized a Sunday worship service for the Chin people at one of the churches in Guam. He also organized a volunteer Chin youth group to help out the new arrivals from Myanmar by finding shelters and jobs for them. He leased homes to allocate the new arrivals who had financial crises to rent apartments.

Pastor Paul became a case worker who solved the daily needs and problems of the Chins while struggling to support his family in Myanmar. Visiting the sick in the hospitals and jails also became one of his unavoidable daily schedules for him. His experiences in counselling the depressed and alcoholic Chins in Guam shaped him to become a good counselling pastor for the Chins. Life in Guam was completely different from life in Chin State for Pastor Paul. As the only resource person among the Chins in Guam, one of his great responsibilities is to help the Chins apply for the US visa. On top

of his social work responsibility, he was also an interpreter and translator when it came to assisting Chin people apply for their US visas.

Pastor Paul arrived in the US fifteen years ago via the island of Guam. Upon his arrival to the US, in order to support his family in Myanmar and to support his own daily needs, he found his first job working at a restaurant in Dallas, Texas. As one of the first arrivals in the US among many of the Chins from Myanmar, he took on many responsibilities including taking care of the new arrivals of the Chins via Guam, Malaysia, and India who needed help with their survival and acclimation to life in the US due to numerous reasons, a major one being language barrier. He became a case worker at a refugee center in Dallas to help and service the needs of Chins in more effective ways. There were many Chin immigrants in Dallas who were struggling for their survival and this led Pastor Paul to spend most of his personal time to help them solve their daily challenges and difficulties.

Pastor Paul organized the Dallas Chin Christian Fellowship with the cooperation of several Chin leaders in Dallas. This fellowship was the beginning of a combined worship service held twice a month on Sunday evenings. All of the Chin immigrants in Dallas who participated in this fellowship were given the space to share their daily experiences related to their burdens, passions, and happiness. About one thousand members in this fellowship were those who migrated via Malaysia and Guam since 2000. Some members from this fellowship decided to establish a church and named it Bethel Baptist Church (BBC) where Pastor Paul was called to serve as a pastor in the church.

The members of BBC were composed of different denominations who had different doctrine, leadership practice, and worship style from Chin state, Myanmar.⁴ The church decided to adopt the Baptist's doctrine and leadership practice in principle but flexibility in leadership practice and worship style became a challenge for both leaders and pastors of the church. Moreover, combining both pastoral work and case work in the pastoral works of the church became a great challenge for Pastor Paul.

2. Interviewee Two: Pastor Thang

Pastor Thang is an associate pastor of Bethlehem Baptist Church. In addition, I invited him to be one of my personal interviewees for the research and he willingly accepted my request.⁵ The interview took place in the associate pastor's office of the church where it gave us privacy to do the interview process without any disturbances. The office secretary of the church provided us with coffee and snacks. Similar to the first interview with Pastor Paul, Pastor Thang and I met twice and each meeting session took approximately one and a half hours. The church (BBC) invited Pastor Thang to serve as an associate full-time pastor four years ago while he was pursuing a Doctor of Ministry program (DMin) from one of the theological seminaries in the US. Pastor Thang had been serving as a volunteer pastor of BBC since a year after he arrived in the US. He was fifty years old during the time of the interview.

⁴ There are many denominations in Chin state such as Baptists, Upper Methodist Church, Lower Myanmar Methodist Church, Gospel Baptist Church, Church of Jesus Christ, United Pentecostal Church, Church on the Rock, Assembly of God, Believers Church of Jesus Christ, The Church, Holiness Church, The Mission Church, Jehovah's Witness, and Salvation Army, etc.

⁵ See appendix H.

Pastor Thang is a father to one son and two daughters. He has been serving as an assistant pastor of a Baptist church from Chin state for more than ten years. The Baptist church where he was serving as a pastor sent him to Malaysia to serve as an interim pastor for one of the Chin Christian fellowships in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia for two years.⁶ He willingly accepted the request and decided to serve the Lord as a pastor of the Chin refugees for a couple of years and returned back to Chin state. Upon his arrival in Malaysia, he automatically became both a pastor and a caseworker who solved the daily struggles and challenges of the Chin refugees in Malaysia. He was in charge of leading the weekly Sunday regular worship service of the fellowship, conducting wedding ceremonies, reconciling broken families, helping people apply for jobs, counselling the depressed and alcoholics, visiting the sick in hospitals and jails, and helping the prisoners in jails to be free with the support of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Malaysia.

Pastor Thang came to his decision when he saw his fellow refugees in Malaysia who did not have any spiritual leader(s) and mentors for their daily life. To put it into his perspective, they appeared as though they were a flock of sheep that were scattered everywhere in the wilderness without having a proper shepherd. Moreover, the Chin Christian fellowship where he was serving as a pastor decided to appoint him as their permanent pastor for their fellowship. He decided to accept the unavoidable challenge

⁶ There have been many Chin refugees in Malaysia since 2000. They organized many Chin Christian fellowships based on their original birth place or dialect such as Lai, Lautu, Mara, Zophei, Senthang, Zahnak thlang, Vailam tlang, etc. The aims of these fellowships are to take care of their respective people in more effective ways.

and request that led him to invite his family from Myanmar to come to Malaysia and join him in serving the Lord as a pastor for the Chin refugees in Malaysia.

Pastor Thang founded the United Chin Christian Fellowship of Malaysia (UCCFM) with the corporation of other regional and dialect-based Chin Christian fellowships in Malaysia. On account of the meeting decision, Pastor Thang became a part-time secretary of UCCFM for two years. As stated previously, there were more than ten Chin fellowships in Malaysia that were founded to take care of their respective people under the fellowship. After founding UCCMF, all leaders of Chin fellowships decided to have combined worship service once per three months for worship fellowship and seminar for finding effective leadership practice among the Chin refugees in Malaysia.

After residing in Malaysia for three years, Pastor Thang and his family decided to apply for the UNHCR card (Refugee Card) because it was unsafe for them to return to Myanmar under the military government dictatorship. It was very dangerous for people to live in Myanmar who helped the refugees or armed forces that rebelled against the military government of Myanmar. Fortunately for Pastor Thang and his family, they received the UNHCR card, a ticket that allowed refugees to migrate into one of the so-called third countries, Europe, or the US, as immigrants.

Pastor Thang and his family arrived in the US twelve years ago. As previously stated, he started to study DMin at a theological seminary in Dallas, while serving as a part-time volunteer pastor for BBC. Later on, he became the full-time associate pastor. The pastoral life in Myanmar is relatively different from that of Malaysia and the US for Pastor Thang. The responsibilities of the pastors in Myanmar are spiritual leadership, office management of the church, visiting the sick, counselling, and home visitation. In

the US and Malaysia, the pastors became both pastors and case workers for the church members.

Pastor Thang, similar to Pastor Paul, also became both a pastor and a case worker for the church, BBC. The church has more than eight hundred members but it had only two full-time pastors in 2019. At the same time, Pastor Thang also volunteered as secretary of Dallas Chin Christian Minister Fellowship (DCMF).⁷ The aim of this fellowship is to unite the Chin immigrant churches in Dallas to worship together once per three months, organizing seminars and leadership training for leaders of churches in Dallas.

3. Interviewee Three: Mr. Bik

I also invited Mr. Bik for this interview with the help of his pastor, Pastor Thang. The interview took place at his residence, Dallas, Texas. We used his family's library room so that we could have a quiet space and privacy for the interview. Prior to the interview, we let the rest of his family know that we would begin the interview shortly and we asked that peace be kept. Similar to the previous interviews, I met with Mr. Bik two times, each meeting consisting of about one hour. Mr. Bik was the chairman (president) of the church BBC during the time of this interview. He was sixty-five years old at the time.

⁷ There were about ten Chin immigrant churches under the fellowship of (DCCMF) of Dallas in 2019.

Mr. Bik arrived in the US together with his family twelve years ago. They also arrived in the US via Malaysia. He has three children, a daughter and two sons. He arrived first to Malaysia as a refugee and his family joined him two years after his arrival to Malaysia. He graduated from one of the universities in Myanmar. He was a former high school teacher and worked for more than ten years in Chin state, Myanmar. While serving as a high school teacher at one of the community high schools in Chin State, Mr. Bik took on other roles to which he dedicated his time to serve as an active youth leader, Sunday school teacher, a community leader, and deacon of the church.

Mr. Bik fled to Malaysia to avoid the religious persecution and economic crisis in Myanmar. For many Chin refugees like Mr. Bik, Malaysia became a place where they could financially support their families back in Myanmar and wait to migrate to one of the third countries, as many immigrants are doing till today. Many refugees in Malaysia work illegally in order to provide for themselves and their families back in Myanmar. Six months after his arrival in Malaysia, Mr. Bik was elected chairman for one of the Chin Christian fellowships in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Some Chin chairmen in Malaysia were full-time pastors for the fellowship. The fellowship where Mr. Bik was serving as a volunteer chairman did not have a full-time pastor, so in a sense, this led him to serve like a full-time pastor for the fellowship.

Mr. Bik led most, if not all, of the fellowship activities including leading the worship, managing the administration, visiting the sick in hospitals and jails, accompanying people to UNHCR office in Kuala Lumpur as a translator, helping new arrivals from Myanmar find accommodations and helping them get acclimated, etc. He received some compensation from the fellowship but he had to work in the factory to

cover the expenditures of his family. As a graduate student from Myanmar, he also volunteered to be an adviser and board member for the schools of Chin Student Organization (CSO) in Malaysia.⁸ There were more than ten CSO schools founded in some places of Malaysia where most Chin refugees resided.

As previously stated, Mr. Bik and his family arrived in Dallas, Texas ten years ago. After they arrived in Dallas, they first tried to find a church for worship and they took membership at Bethlehem Baptist Church (BBC), the research site of this research. Mr. Bik was elected as deacon of the church a year after his family took membership at the church. After serving as a deacon for nearly two years, he was elected treasurer of the church, which is appointed every two years. Mr. Bik was elected again as chairman of BBC upon completion of this research.

4. Interviewee Four: Mr. Lian

I invited Mr. Lian for this interview with the help of his pastor. The interview took place at one of the small meeting rooms of BBC. With the permission of their church pastor, we used a small quiet room for the interview to have our private conversation. We met twice; each meeting took about one and one half hours. Mr. Lian has lived and worked in Dallas for about ten years. He was chairman of the youth fellowship of BBC during the time of this research.

⁸ Chin Student Organization was a self-supported non-government organization school, founded by Chin refugee students in Malaysia who graduated from the universities of Myanmar. The refugee university students volunteered as teachers for these schools. The purpose of this school is to educate refugee children those who have no right to attend the public-school of Malaysia. These schools were founded as self-supported schools, funded by the Chin communities but, later the Malaysia based UNHCR office came to support the volunteer teachers of CSO schools as compensations.

Mr. Lian is a single 26-year-old male from Hakha, the capital of the Chin state. He has four siblings. His father arrived first in Malaysia as a refugee like many other Chins in Malaysia. He joined his father in Malaysia alongside his mother and his siblings when he was about eleven years old. He was attending fourth grade in Myanmar when he and his family migrated as refugees to Malaysia. Mr. Lian continued his education at the school of Chin Student Organization (CSO) in Malaysia where he studied for three years. Shortly after, Lian and his family migrated to the US as immigrants. This was over 10 years ago.

Mr. Lian, an enthusiastic student in pursuing education, continued his education in the US. He started from eight grade at one of the community schools in Dallas. He faced countless challenges in the school mainly because of the language barrier. He had to learn the English language which is a third language for the Chin people of Myanmar. He had to adapt to the new culture, lifestyle, and foods in the foreign land. He gradually came to overcome those challenges with the help and encouragement of his pastors from the church and neighboring Chins in Dallas, Texas. He also took a special English class, organized by the church (BBC) for teaching English to young people from the Chins like Mr. Lian.

Mr. Lian had some native English-speaking classmates from the school and he also joined them in the Sunday school class which helped him improve not only his spiritual maturity but also helped him improve in his English speaking and hearing. With the help and encouragement of his friends, he learned how to write and speak English as native English speakers do. He became an outstanding student among his classmates in his tenth grade. He also became an active Sunday school student among his fellow

children in the church. As a result, he became a Sunday school teacher for his church, BBC, when he was studying eleventh grade. At the same time, he was attending Sunday school's youth class with his English friends at the English church. He could join the Sunday school services of both English and Chin because the English church worship was in the morning at 8:00-10:00 am and the Chin church worship was at 2:00-4:00 pm.

Upon his high school graduation, Mr. Lian went on to higher education by attending college with the scholarships he received from school and sponsors from his church, BBC. As a pioneer college student among Chin immigrants in Dallas, he became a volunteer guide who helped neighboring Chin children to do their homework from school. This is because most Chin immigrant parents are unable to help their children to do their homework due to the language barrier and/or lack of education they themselves have. He organized a volunteer group consisting of youth who are high school and college students to assist the children in completing their homework assignments.

Mr. Lian also became an active leader of the youth fellowship at BBC. This was a difficult role for him to take on because it required him to guide the young people of the church. There are two types of young people in the church; one group of young people were those who grew up in the US, like Mr. Lian, and another group of young adults who came along with their parents from Myanmar. The youth fellowship was a blend of the young adults who came to the US at a later age, and the young people who grew up in the US. The young adults continued to lead in the similar manner of sticking with the leadership style of their home land, Chin state, while the other group of young people were adapting to the new leadership practice of the new land, "American style." Consequently, this created many misunderstandings between deacon leaders and youth

leaders regarding leadership practice in the church. This is one of the great challenges for all of the Chin immigrant churches in the US and Europe.

5. Interviewee Five: Miss Lydia

Like Mr. Lian, I also invited Miss Lydia for this interview with the help of her pastor. The interview took place at her home. We used her library room where we could have a quiet space to conduct our interview privately. We met twice and each meeting lasted about one hour. Miss Lydia was chairperson of the women's fellowship of BBC at the time of the interview and research. Miss Lydia has lived and worked in this town for nine years. She was forty-seven years old but still very active, similar to that of a twenty-five-year-old at the time of this interview.

Miss Lydia arrived in the US with her two brothers and her mother from Myanmar. They joined her father who arrived in the US via Guam as an asylum seeker fifteen years ago. Miss Lydia, a graduate student from one of the universities of Myanmar, was a devoted youth leader and church school teacher of their church in Chin state. She became a Sunday school teacher and choir member of their church since she was studying grade nine in her hometown. She was also an active leader of the university Christian fellowship (UCF) of the university in Myanmar where she graduated.

A year after Miss Lydia arrived in the US, BBC requested her to be a volunteer to be a Sunday School teacher. She also volunteered to decorate the pulpit and prepare for Sunday worship service at the church. At the same, she became an active youth leader and choir member of the church BBC. She became the only lady chairperson of the youth fellowship of their church while Chin women were neglected to be selected as top leaders

of the church or organization among the Chin community. In other words, women are not considered to be top leaders, but followers. Nevertheless, they can be smarter than men in any organization or fellowship. But the youth fellowship of BBC elected Miss Lydia to be the chairperson of the youth fellowship of the church.

Miss Lydia resigned from both youth activities and leadership role of the youth fellowship of the church after she got married. Soon after she left the activities of the youth fellowship for a year, the women fellowship of BBC elected her again as a member of the women fellowship of the church. A year later, she was elected again as secretary of the women fellowship. At the same time, she also served as an advisor of the Sunday School teachers fellowship. She served as the secretary for two years and the women fellowship elected her as chairperson of the women fellowship. The responsibility of a woman chairperson is like a woman pastor because the church BBC has no woman pastor to lead women and church school fellowship.

Participants of Electronic Email Question Survey

As mentioned in chapter five, the researcher organized an email survey group to some selected pastors from Chin Baptist Churches USA (CBC USA). The researcher invited four senior pastors (ages 55-70) and five junior pastors (ages 30-45) from pastors of CBC USA. Out of the selected pastors, the senior pastors had many experiences in pastoral leadership and management from Chin state but the junior pastors had no or less pastoral experience from Chin state.

All the senior pastors (ages 55-70) had some pastoral experience in Chin state, Myanmar before they migrated to the US. Some had been serving as general secretary of

the Zomi Baptist Convention, ZBC (now Chin Baptist Convention, CBC), the largest Chin Baptist convention that has 23 affiliated Baptist associations from Chin state and outside Chin state as well. Some also had the experience of being appointed general secretary or chairman of their respective associations that had more than 20 affiliated Baptist churches.

These senior pastors arrived in the US along with the Chin immigrants via Malaysia and Guam. After arriving in the US, they worked in restaurants or warehouses to support their families because there was no formal church to serve as a pastor. Nonetheless, the Chins who resided in the US organized the Chin Christian fellowships that later gave birth to Chin churches in the US. After forming this fellowship, they volunteered to be part-time pastors to help the daily needs of the Chins in the US. Daily needs included the need for translation services/assistance as well as caseworkers who would help people apply for jobs, accompany them to hospital appointments, assistance in paying bills, etc. On top of that, most pastors helped the new arrivals buy their household needs as well as drinking water for the family. As a result, all full-time pastors automatically became pastors cum caseworkers in the church when the Chin came to organize formal churches in the US. Generally, all these pastors are well trained, educated, and experienced in the area of leadership in Chin state, but they were facing countless challenges in adapting the leadership practice of churches in the new land due to numerous reasons.

The junior pastors (ages 30-45), who became pastors after their arrival in the US, can be divided into two groups. The first group has two types of people, those who arrived to the US for further theological studies from Myanmar and those who began

studying theology in the US after their arrival to the US as immigrants. Some of the Chin theological students from Myanmar came to apply for asylum or religious visa (R1 visa) to serve as pastors of Chin immigrant churches in the US due to the requests of Chin immigrant churches in the US. At the same time, there were some Chin immigrants who graduated from seminaries of the US and were asked to serve as pastors in the Chin church. As newly graduated students from seminaries of the US, they have some kind of contextual understanding on the leadership practice of the new land as opposed to their counterparts.

The second group were those (junior pastors 30-45) who came to the US along with the immigrant Chins via Malaysia and became volunteer part-time pastors of Chin churches in the US before they became full-time pastors in the church. They are theological graduate students from Myanmar, with some pastoral experiences in Malaysia, but had no pastoral experiences in any other place. Most of the Chin pastors in Malaysia served as volunteer part-time pastors in their respective Christian fellowship due to lack of committed full-time pastors. Although they had some pastoral experience in Malaysia, they still faced many challenges when it came to adapting the contextual leadership practice of the new land.

Focus Group

The researcher conducted the first focus group with twelve participants, who have lived in the US at least five years. All the participants in the focus group are leaders of the church, including women and youth leaders (ages 20-35) from the church. The participants of this focus group can be divided into three groups.

The first group is composed of the so-called, young leaders (ages 20-35), mainly from the youth fellowship, women fellowship, music committee, and church school department. Most of these leaders came to the US via Malaysia and Guam. Some are graduates from universities in Myanmar with some leadership experiences in Chin communities of Malaysia. However, some leaders graduated from some colleges in the US, having some connection with the culture and tradition of the new land, but had no leadership experience among the Chins.

The second group of leaders are between ages 36-50. They are from deacon and committee members of the church. They all came to the US through Malaysia, India, Mexico, and Guam. There are a few leaders with leadership experience in Chin state before they came to the US. Some leaders who came through Malaysia had some leadership experience serving in Malaysia, and there were some who had no church leadership experiences before they came to the US. In general, we can see that some of the leaders of the Chin churches in the US were those who barely attended churches when they were living in Chin state. But, after their arrival in the US, they became leaders, with no prior church leadership experiences, but had to step up and take on the role due to the lack of leaders in the church. Moreover, as mentioned before, one uniqueness of Chin Baptist churches in the US was its composition of many different denominations within the churches who came from Chin state. As a result, we see that there are some lay leaders in the Baptist churches who were from different denominations while in Chin state.

The third group of leaders are between ages 51-65. They, too, came along with the Chin immigrants through Malaysia and Guam. They all had leadership experiences in

Chin state, Myanmar and some in Malaysia. Some had served as officers of deacons or church councils in their prospective churches in Chin state. Some also had been serving as fellowship chairman or secretary in their respective fellowship in Malaysia.⁹ All of these leaders came from the same denomination, Baptist, where the majority of the Chins belong in Chin state. Moreover, being former arrivals among the Chin in the US, most of these leaders are organizers of the Chin churches founded in the new land. However, being new immigrants in the new land, they have no leadership experiences nor cultural understanding of the new land. As a result, we see that they are leading the churches based on the leadership practice they used in Chin state, Myanmar. We find this to be conflicting with the leadership styles adapted by the other groups.

As they all (ages 51-65) are organizers to found the churches, most of these leaders used to think that the overall leadership should be done under their control and leadership. On the other hand, the leadership practice they took from their homeland led them to fail to connect with the modern leadership practice that is based on the context of the new land. Again, we see that there is some kind of generation gap among older people and younger people due to the different ages, education, personal experiences, and contextual understanding of the new land.

⁹ There are many Chin fellowships in Malaysia based on their regional names or dialect such as Lai, Zotung, Lautu, Zophei, Mara, Senthang, Khuahring tlang etc. There also had village or town-based fellowships such as Khampat, Hakha khuachung, Tiddim, Zokhua, Matu, Thantlang, etc.

Data Analyses

Leadership Challenges: Contextual Understanding of the New Land

As new immigrants in the new land, contextual understanding of the new land became the main challenge for leaders of Chin churches in the US. They all came from the so-called third world country, one of the poorest countries in Asia where the culture, contexts, society, and lifestyles are totally different from the new land, the US. The different educational background, personal experiences, and world view of individual people also lead to have different understanding on the new land. Based on the personal interviews, electronic email survey, and focus group done for this research, table one pictures why leaders of Chin churches are facing challenges in leadership practice.

Table 1: Overview of Contextual Understanding among Participants

Names	Pastoral Experiences and Contextual Understanding
Pastor Paul	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Seventy years old. More than twenty years of pastoral experiences, more than five years of top leadership experiences in Chin state. - Three years pastoral experiences in the island of Guam. - Finished Diploma of Theology in Chin state. No further theological study. - No contextual understanding before he became pastor in the US.
Pastor Thang	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fifty years old. More than ten years pastoral experiences in Chin state. Four years pastoral experiences in Malaysia. - Finished M.Div. in Myanmar. Finished DMIN in the US. - Had some contextual understanding before he became pastor in the US.
Mr. Bik	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sixty years old. Had some leadership experience in Chin state and Malaysia. - Graduated from a university in Myanmar. - No Contextual understanding of leadership in the US.

Table 1: Overview of Contextual Understanding among Participants (Cont.)

Names	Pastoral Experiences and Contextual Understanding
Mr. Lian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Twenty-six years old. No leadership experience in his life before he became chairman of the youth fellowship of the church. - Finish college in the US. - Have some contextual understanding of the new land.
Ms. Lydia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Forty-seven years old. No leadership experiences in leadership before she became youth chairperson of the church in the US. - Graduated from a university in Myanmar. - No contextual understanding of leadership in the new land.
Email survey group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ages between 55-70 had leadership experiences in Chin state. No contextual understanding of leadership in the new land. - There are two groups among this (30-45) ages; - Ages between 30-45 (group 1) has contextual understanding of leadership practice in the new land. - Ages between 30-45 (group 2) has less contextual understanding than group one of ages 30-45.
Focus Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Group 1 (20-35 ages) has contextual understanding. - Group 2 (36-50 ages) has some contextual understanding. - Group 3 (51-65 ages) has no contextual understanding.

In this table, there is a clear picture depicting the differences in ages between leaders, their leadership background, as well as their differences in understanding contextual leadership. In addition, this table also shows the different educational background between both pastors and lay leaders of the churches. Due to the different ages between leaders, the older leaders show less concern in cooperating with young leaders, therefore leading them to fail to understand the contextual leadership of the new land. This also leads them to fail to have mutual understanding on church leadership practice. Moreover, some participants in the focus group had no prior knowledge of the term, “contextual leadership” when asked about their understanding of leadership.

Moreover, the gap between the educational background among leaders also became a great challenge to adapt contextual leadership practice for Chin immigrant churches in the US. As we see in table one, some leaders who have different education and leadership backgrounds from Myanmar are still reluctant to adapt to the context of the new land. The young leaders who grew up in the US are ready to lead the church according to the context of the new land. Accordingly, Pastor Thang also said;

As we all are different in ages, geographical background, denomination, education, and leadership experiences that lead us to diverse ideas about every issue we faced in the church. Besides, some pastors who worked together in the same church had diverse ideas in relation to leadership practice due to their different ages, theological ideas, and pastoral experiences.

The combination of two or three different denominations into one church also causes leadership challenges in the Chin churches. As mentioned above, most of the Chins are Baptists, but there are some leaders in the Baptist churches who came from different denominations with different doctrine, different leadership practices, and different worship styles that also caused some challenges in the churches. Leaders from different denominations cannot abandon the leadership practice of their home land, and this is one of the factors that has them feeling reluctant to accept the contextual leadership practices of the new land. On top of that, as minority people in the church, they have an inferiority complex that leads them to deviate from the decisions made by leaders of majority people.

The participation of women in the leadership role of the church also became a challenge while trying to be adaptive to the context of the new land. Lack of women's participation in congregational leadership became a similar leadership issue for all Chin immigrant congregations. Not a single woman was included within the leadership

structure of the church. There are no women deacons or deaconess in any of the Chin churches of the US. The reason behind this issue is that many of the Chins, including most male pastors, regarded Chin women as physically unfit to take on leadership roles in the church because they attached leadership with physical work such as home visitations, case worker's works, which requires driving, which was a challenge for many Chin women at the time.

It also had to do with the culture of the Chins. Most Chin women were expected only to stay at home and take care of the household things and the children. Because of the influence of this traditional concept, women are occasionally selected only for leaders within the women's fellowship and church school fellowship in Chin churches. There were 114 Chin immigrant churches in the US (CBC USA) in 2020 but there were only four full-time and six volunteer part-time women pastors in the whole Chin churches of the US. There are only three ordained women ministers among these women pastors. The church BBC, the selected research site for this research, also had no women pastors when this research was done. As a result, in many issues related to women and leadership, the chairperson of the women's fellowship has to lead the women like a woman pastor of the church. Miss Lydia said in the interview,

As we, the church has no full-time women pastor, I am, as chairperson of the women fellowship, had to lead women fellowship and Sunday school like a women pastor of the church. It is very difficult for us to improve both our spiritual and worldview as we should without a fulltime women pastor in the church.

Moreover, some pastors from the electronic mail survey done for this research are still reluctant to accept women for top leaders or lead pastors of the church. One of the reasons behind this issue was the traditional concept that women are weaker than men both physically and mentally in every aspect of life. This traditional concept resulted in

most women thinking of themselves as unfit to be top leaders among male dominated churches or organizations. According to the results of personal interviews and electronic mail survey for this research, there are some educated women, smarter and more active than men in the church. However, they are neglected by the church for top leaders because they are women or they themselves think that they are unfit to be top leaders of the church or organization.

Leadership Issue between Pastors and Lay Leaders

The main role of the pastor is to provide spiritual care such as preaching, home visits, hospital visits, and counselling, etc. However, as immigrant people in the new land, providing social care such as job appointments, translation at government and school office appointments, and other social help was considered as the role of pastor beyond the pastoral role by many Chin immigrants in the US.

Some Chin churches in the US with more than 500 members used to hire case workers for members of the church, but for most churches that are not able to hire a case worker, then their pastors become both pastors and case workers of the church. As a result, the pastors have no other time to care for the administration and leadership role of the church, and that leads lay leaders to take the leadership and administration of the church. In this way, most of lay leaders came to redefine pastoral role as only for spiritual leaders such as preaching, home and hospital visitation, and counselling in the church.

Therefore, based on the research done for this research, there are some misunderstandings or misinterpretation of defining pastoral role among immigrant Chin

churches in the US. Table two pictures the different understanding of pastoral role among leaders of the church and lay people from the focus group done for the research.

Table 2: Different Understanding of Pastoral Role among Leaders

Names	Pastoral roles
Pastor Paul & Pastor Thang	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Office work, scripture reading, prayer, sermon, home visitation. - Visiting the sick at home, clinic and hospital. - Controlling officer, head of the church, ex-officio. - The Church should hire full-time case workers.
Mr. Bik	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Scripture reading, prayer, sermon, home visitation. - Visiting the sick at home, clinic and hospital. - Helping the social work of members (Case worker) if necessary. - Controlling officer but not head of the church.
Mr. Lian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Scripture reading, prayer, sermon, home visitation. - Visiting the sick at home, clinic, and hospital. - Helping the social work of members (Case worker) - Not head of the church nor controlling officer.
Mss. Lydia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Scripture reading, prayer, sermon, home visitation. - Visiting the sick at home, clinic and hospital. - Helping the social works of members (Case worker) - Controlling officer but not head of the church.
Focus group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Scripture reading, prayer, sermon, home visit, clinic and hospital. - Group 1 (20-35 ages) Not case worker, head and controlling officer - Group 2 (36-50 ages) Not case worker nor head but controlling - Group 3 (51-65 ages) Case worker and controlling but not head
Email Survey group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Office work, scripture reading, prayer, sermon, home visitation. - Visiting the sick at home, clinic and hospital. - Controlling officer, head of the church, ex-officio. - Ages between 55-70 not case worker, the church should hire case worker. - There are two groups among this (30-45) ages; - Ages between 30-45 (group 1) not case workers. - Ages between 30-45 (group 2) not case worker but it should be part of pastoral role if necessary.

The research survey of table of page 112 showed how the immigrant churches define the pastoral role in different ways. The main reason was the demand for the context, the unavoidable responsibilities of every immigrant pastor in the new land, especially in the US. The main challenge Chin immigrants face in the US is language barrier. As they cannot speak English, they need people to accompany them in job application interviews, government appointments, paying their bills, and other social needs such as co-signings when they purchase a new car or new house. In this context, the pastors became the only persons who could take on all these responsibilities as their additional roles in the new land. In other words, the demands of the context in the new land changed the role of the Chin immigrant pastors in the US.

As mentioned above, due to the demand in the context of the new land, the role of the pastors automatically changed among Chin churches in the US. Most of the pastors' weekly responsibilities consisted of helping the daily social needs of their members, case-workers. The pastoral roles in the US are very different from those of Chin state, Myanmar. Pastor Thang stated,

Being a pastor here in the US and in Myanmar are quite different. We do not need to help our members to find a job in Myanmar. So, we have enough time to prepare for Sunday sermons, Bible study, and other spiritual practice as well. But we have no that kind of time here in the US. We have to be available for twenty-four-hour and seven-days a week to help our members like a caseworker. We have no time to sit at our church's office. So, the role and function of the Chin immigrant pastors are somewhat similar to a case-worker.

This situation indirectly affected the spiritual focus of pastors for Sunday sermons and Bible studies, their main calling for the church. They do not have enough time to study the Bible for Sunday sermons and preaching in other worship services. They also

have no time to do home visitation, which all the Chin members demand and regard as an essential role for a pastor in the church. However, it is impossible, for example, that the two pastors from the research site BBC with about 700 members, visit every member's home, while struggling to accomplish their daily case-worker works. Again, some of the interviewees from the research stated during the interview that they wish their pastors could visit their homes at least once within two months. As a result, members came to accuse their pastors of not being able to focus on both spiritual aspects and home visitation.

Moreover, regarding the definition of pastoral role, table two shows that the pastors and lay leaders of the church have two different views on pastoral leadership in the church. Lay leaders also have two different views in defining pastoral leadership. Lay leaders who came along with leadership experiences of their home land want to put lay leaders as top leaders of the church, while young lay leaders with contextual understanding of the new land, want to put pastors as top leaders of the church. Another reason why most lay leader wants to position a lay leader as top leader of the church is because most churches were organized by lay leaders and their pastors were hired after the church was well organized. Moreover, some older lay leaders from the focus group stated that their pastors should be under the leadership of lay leaders who hired them for the church.

Lay leaders who did not want to put pastors as top leaders of the church rooted their leadership ideas from their home land, Myanmar, where authoritative leadership practice strongly influenced its people for over sixty years. This leadership practices top-down leadership that accepts ideas of only top leaders but denies ideas from people who

are the ground level of the organization. These lay leaders follow democratic procedure of majority vote for making decisions in principle but nothing can be done without prior notification to the top leaders of the church. In other words, every agenda to be presented in the meeting should go first to the top leaders of the church before any meeting is held. They want every activity of the church to be run under their control. These lay leaders want to put pastors as financial controlling officers, who manage the church's finance, under the control of lay leaders of the church.

However, as we see in table two, there are some young leaders who want to position pastors as top leaders in the church. The reason why they want to position pastors as top leaders is that pastors had more experience in both learning and practical experience than lay leaders. Besides, they have more contact or fellowship with both lay leaders and congregational leaders from the new land than lay leaders of the church. Especially as they are full-time leaders of the church, they can spend much more time than lay leaders for leading the church, based on their contextual understanding of the new land. One of the leaders from the focus group said,

There are some leaders who are acting as top leaders of the church. However, they could not give enough time for leading the church in practical. They all are full-time workers in companies or warehouses and, at the same time, they also have to give time for their families. They want everything to go through or under their control but they have no enough time to do everything as they want. Besides, most lay leaders have no contextual understanding of the new land that led them to apply the leadership practice they took from their homeland, Chin state.

These young lay leaders also want to exercise the democratic procedure of leading meetings that allow people to present different ideas and agendas for achieving the goal of the church. They want people to make every decision based on the context of the people and the new land. They also want more involvement of the pastors in the

leadership practice of the church, while some older lay leaders are reluctant to accept pastors as *ex-officio* leaders of the church.

Another challenge facing Chin churches regarding leadership practice in the US is the combination of different denominations into one church, the Baptist church. As mentioned before, there are many different denominations in Chin state, Myanmar. However, when they came to the US, most came under one church, the Baptist church. One of the reasons that led them to come to the church was to get help from the church when they faced challenges, especially death. One of the biggest challenges Chin people face in the US is the funeral cost. This also became the main reason that combined all Chin immigrant churches in the US under Chin Baptist Churches USA (CBC USA). CBC USA assists \$ 8000.00 per person from its affiliated member churches for funeral cost. As a result, every Chin immigrant took membership to the church that was affiliated to CBC USA. However, in leadership practice, this also led the church to face leadership challenges because the church is composed of different people from different denominations with different doctrine and leadership practice.

Despite Chin churches in the US having different understanding on defining pastoral roles, the research shows that the spiritual and social aspects of pastoral roles cannot be separated because they are integrated, especially for Chin immigrant churches in the US. The daily activity that the pastors do as home visits, phone conversations for helping someone to apply for a job, transportation for worshipers, accompanying members to hospitals, clinics, and school appointments, etc., can be regarded as a kind of social service. But in fact, all these are under the umbrella of God's ministry, the important pastoral roles for immigrant churches in the US.

The Impact of Church's Leadership and Family Expectations

The research study shows that the leadership practice of the church also has many impacts into the family life of the church, the members. The church became the only place where all people can receive any available resources for their daily living and help as well. In other words, the Chin immigrant churches in the US became the only resources center that provided every available resource of ideas, training, workshops and guidelines to help its members solve their daily struggle in the new land. In this sub-topic, table three presents the different views of the impact of church's leadership, and people's expectations of the church.

Table 3: Different Understanding of Using the Church among Leaders and Members

Names	The Church should be;
Pastor Paul & Pastor Thang	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Center for worship and praising God together through fellowship. - Center for connecting people through worship and fellowship. - Center for people to leave behind their burdens and problems. - Center for people receiving spiritual strength and contextual understanding for their daily living.
Mr. Bik & Mr. Lian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Center for worship and praising God together through fellowship. - Center for giving people leadership and spiritual training. - Center for teaching young people about Chin culture and tradition. - Center for providing leaders training about contextual leadership.
Mss. Lydia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Center for worship and praising God together through fellowship. - Center for people left behind their burdens and problems - Training center for Christian education and family planning. - People receiving training for how to care for one another.
Focus Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Center for worship and praising God together through fellowship. - Group 1 (20-35 ages) Center for young people to receive both spiritual and inter-personal fellowship, and learning center for the culture and tradition of the Chins.

Table 3: Different Understanding of Using the Church among Leaders and Members (Cont.)

Focus Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Group 2 (36-50 ages) Center for giving every available training to uplift the world view, thinking, and contextual understanding of the people. - Group 3 (51-65 ages) Center for giving every available training to uplift the world view, thinking, and contextual understanding of the people.
Email survey group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Center for worship and praising God together through fellowship. - Group 1 (20-35 ages) Center for young people receive both spiritual and cultural understanding of the Chins. - Group 2 (36-50 ages) Center for giving every available training to uplift the world view, thinking and contextual understanding of the people. - Group 3 (51-65 ages) Center for giving spiritual maturity in Christ such as worship, camp, crusade, and leadership training.

Table three shows that all people regard the church as a multi-learning center for all members of the church. But pastors of the research site and electronic mail survey see the church as the main center for people receiving spiritual empowerment and deep fellowship among members of the church. They also want to use the church for giving leadership training for nurturing the leadership skills of lay leaders based on biblical and contextual understanding of the new land. They organized some crusades (spiritual awakening programs) using some popular Chin pastors and evangelists both from the US and even from Chin state, Myanmar as speakers of the programs. But, according to pastor Paul, the programs were not as effective as they should be because most members could not participate in the programs.

Again, all leaders and participants research see the church as a multi-learning center for members of the church. However, as mentioned repeatedly, all parents of the immigrant churches in the US are working at different factories and companies. They are

very busy working for their living and they do not have enough time to participate in the training offered by the church for its members. Regarding this issue, Mr. Bik mentioned in the interview:

Being leaders in the immigrant church face many challenges in the activities of the church. People see church as a multi-learning center for nurturing people into both spiritual and world view as necessary. But people cannot spend time attending trainings organized by the church for its members. The church wishes to have at least three times leadership training for the church but in reality, we could have only once in a year. Besides, even some deacons and executive members of the church used to fail to attend this training, done for only once a year in the church.

As immigrant people in the new land, we see that they all are struggling to support both their families in the US and those who are in Chin state. For example, most of the immigrant Chins living in the US left behind their grandparents, their parents, their siblings, and other relatives in Chin state, those who need support for food and daily living. As a result, most parents from fathers and mothers are working in different warehouses and companies with different shifts of working time. For instance, most mothers from the families used to work at the first shift early morning and the fathers used to work second shift late evening after the mother came back from work, to look after their children in turn. Besides, based on the research site, we see that some leaders from the church worked on weekend second shift work that hindered them from participating in the activities and training of the church done on Saturday or Sunday.

Moreover, the second reason people cannot give time for the leadership training (leadership training for leaders of the church, child care training for parents, youth training) that is organized by the church is the small sushi business. The research site of the church BBC was organized with people who are mainly working at different factories, warehouses, companies. But some are sushi franchised, working for seven days

a week with at least ten hours per day.¹⁰ As a franchisee, they have to take care of their sushi bars for the whole day from 8:00 AM to 7:00 PM every day, including Saturday and Sunday. They have to start working at about 7:00 AM in the morning because they have to finish all the sushi items to meet the early lunch of their customers before 11:00 AM. They have to close the sushi bars at 7:00 PM every day. Some immigrant churches, including the research site, in the US worship on Sunday evening at 2:00 PM or 3:00 PM due to the request of the sushi business owners from members of the church. As a result, they do not have enough time to take care of their children. They cannot spend time attending the trainings organized by the church for parents of the families.

Furthermore, the children of Chin immigrant people are spending most of their time at schools and they are ready to accept the context of the new land. But each family faces the challenge of life in America: paying regular billing, food choices, technological impact, way of living such as individual versus community mindset, and more. It is clear that there are gaps between the parents or older people and the children. While their children are ready to accept the American culture and its way of life, the parents are still reluctant and not ready. They are facing a great challenge in the families and community because most of their children are no longer able to speak the Chin language. Miss Lydia mentioned in the interview that most of the parents in the family are not able to talk with their children smoothly because most younger children do not understand Chin dialect, their parents' mother tongue of the Chins. She continued to say:

¹⁰ Sushi businesses are franchised by many Chin immigrants in the US as family-owned small businesses.

Because of this issue, the church organizes many summer camps for the young children such as Chin language and literature learning, church school camp using Chin language for teaching, cultural training for the youth that will help our young people more understanding of the language, culture, and tradition of the Chins. We also hope that this will help each family to build a healthy family among children and parents. We also hope that this will bridge the generation gap to build a healthy and ready for harmonious living among themselves and with the larger society. In this way, the church would be one of the best places where the Chin immigrants can find their guidance and solutions for their challenges, older people and the young people share their interests, passions, and burdens together.

The church organized some trainings, seminars, and camps that will help people to solve their daily challenges. However, some parents do not understand the importance of these programs while most parents cannot spare their time for those programs. As a result, most trainings became beneficial only for young people and the children who can give time and know the importance as well. In short, the research shows that the main challenge Chin immigrants face in the US is giving time for trainings and activities that will help to solve the challenges they are facing in their families and their daily life.

Summary

This chapter presents a brief finding from the research based on personal interviews, focus group, and electronic mail survey. As immigrant people in the US, the Chins are facing countless challenges in their daily life. The church became the only resource center where people receive spiritual empowerment, leaving behind their daily burdens, sharing their interests, passions, and burdens together through prayer and encouragement from pastors of the church. More than this, people hope the church becomes the place where people together find ways of solving their common challenges through effective contextual leadership in the new land. The next conclusions chapter will explore reflections based on the research findings.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

The purpose of this research was to explore contextual leadership practice for congregational leaders of Chin immigrant churches in the US. Chapter one introduced a brief historical background of the research site and the emergence of the research questions for the research. Chapter two highlighted the situations of Myanmar and the general background of the Chin ethnic people that led them to immigrate into the third countries, especially to the US.

The lenses that the researcher used for exploring contextual leadership were discussed in chapters three and four. Chapter five presented the research methodology used for the research. Chapter six presented the research findings and data analysis based on personal interviews, focus groups and electronic mail survey. The final chapter will summarize the research findings based on the research done for the thesis. Besides, the biblical, theological and theoretical lenses used for exploring most appropriate leadership practice for the research will help the readers to understand the importance of finding effective leadership practice for the congregation, especially for immigrant churches in the US.

Summary of Research Findings

As stated in the results chapter of this thesis, the summaries of research findings or what were learned from the research are stated again in this chapter as a recap of the results chapter. Based on the research stated in chapter six, the researcher gathered three main issues from personal interviews, electronic mail surveys, and the focus group discussions conducted for this research. The main issues explored from the research are lack of contextual understanding, different understanding on pastoral role and leadership, and the impact of family expectations on the church.

Contextual Understanding

According to John Patton “context” means “the whole background or environment” that is relevant to a particular “circumstance or event.” At the same time, “contextuality” means the social situation that reflects the uniqueness of thought and action of a community or Christian community.¹ This means every person or community in the world has its own context or uniqueness according to the place where they lived. For example, the context of people living in Myanmar will be different from those of the people living in America and Europe. The different culture, custom, and world view of the people become the main obstacle to accept the new contexts, especially in the new land and society. From Christian perspective, we see that this context also involves the practice of faith and theology of the Christian community. In this thesis, the research

¹ John Patton, *Pastoral Care in Context: An Introduction to Pastoral Care* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1993), 39.

findings indicate that most of the immigrant congregational leaders have weaknesses in understanding the context of the new land and society.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the age difference between leaders, their leadership background, educational background, and different emphasis on contextual understanding became the main challenges for the immigrant churches. Due to the above differences among leaders, there are two groups of leaders in church in general. The older leaders think themselves as smart enough to lead the church with no contextual understanding of the context and the young leaders are trying to have contextual understanding of the context, the new land. Besides, the older leaders who have some education and leadership backgrounds from Myanmar are still reluctant to adapt to the context of the new land when the young leaders who grew up in the US are ready to lead the church according to the context of the new land.

One of the big issues seen today is that some pastors who worked together in the same church had diverse ideas in relation to leadership practice due to their different ages, leadership background, and contextual understanding. Another issue is about the different ages between the lead or church pastor of the church and the lay leader or deacon of the church. For example, based on the research, one of the lead pastors from the Chin church is about 75 years of age when the chairman of that church is about 35 years of age. Because of the difference between the two leaders, they have diverse ideas in relation to leadership practice, contextual understanding, and decision making for important agendas in the meetings.

The cultural bias of the Chin upon women also became a great challenge for Chin churches in the US to accept the contextual leadership practice of the new land. In the

Chin culture, women were expected only to stay at home and take care of the household things and the children. Because of the influence of this traditional concept, women are occasionally selected only for leaders within the women's fellowship and church school fellowship in Chin churches. There are more than 114 Chin churches in the US but there is only one woman lead pastor of a Chin church in the US that has about 100 members. Moreover, there are no deaconesses in the whole Chin churches of the US when this research was done in 2020. In fact, for leaders of the church, developing the old cultural view of the homeland for engaging the new cultural experiences in the new land became a great challenge for Chin immigrant churches in the US.

Different Understanding of Pastoral Leadership among Leaders

Because of the demand of the context in the new land, the immigrant churches define the pastoral role in different ways. In other words, language barrier and cultural challenges in the new land changes the pastoral role of the immigrant churches in the new land. In short, the pastoral role of the immigrant churches in the US and those of Myanmar are quite different. The main roles and responsibilities of the pastors in Myanmar are mainly spiritual affairs such as preaching, praying, Bible study, office work of the church, and visitation to the sick at home and clinic. However, in the new land of the US, pastors became case-workers who should be available to help their members twenty-four hours a day and seven days a week. As a result, they do not have enough time to study the Bible for preaching and sermon that leads them to fail their main calling for the congregation.

Another reason that changes the definition of pastoral role was the older leaders of Chin churches who are still attaching to the authoritative leadership style of their home

land that was practiced by the military government in Myanmar. The research shows that most of the recent top lay leaders of the Chin churches are the organizers of the church who hired the pastor, who should be faithful to their leadership role. As organizers of the church, these lay leaders think themselves as top leaders who will have full authority to control the pastors and leadership practice of the church. On the other hand, lay leaders who do not want to put pastors as top leaders of the church rooted their leadership ideology from their homeland, Myanmar, where authoritative leadership practice strongly influenced its people for over sixty years. This leadership practices top-down leadership that follows ideas of only top leaders but denies ideas from people who are the ground level of the organization.

However, there is another group of young leaders who have contextual understanding of the new land, want to put pastors as top leaders in the church. For this group, pastors had more experience in both learning and practical experience than lay leaders. They can spend much more time than lay leaders in leading the church, based on their contextual understanding of the new land. One of the leaders from the focus group said,

There are some lay leaders who are acting as top leaders of the church. However, they could not give enough time for leading the church in practical. They all are full-time workers in companies or warehouses and, at the same time, they also have to give time for their families. They want everything to go through or under their control but they have no enough time to do everything as they want. Besides, most lay leaders have no contextual understanding of the new land that led them to apply the leadership practice they took from their homeland, Chin state.

These young lay leaders also want to exercise the democratic procedure of leading meetings that allow people to present different ideas and agendas for achieving the goal of the church. They want people to make every decision based on the context of the

people and the new land. They also want more involvement of the pastors in the leadership practice of the church, while some older lay leaders are reluctant to accept pastors as *ex-officio* leaders of the church.

Another challenge Chin churches face regarding leadership practice in the US is the combination of different denominations into one denomination, the Baptist church. Most of the church members who came from different denominations used to bring diverse leadership practice and worship style into the church that led to great challenges for the church. For instance, the so-called para-churches that separated from the Baptist church in Chin state to practice a charismatic worship style of worship and lay leaders oriented leadership practice of the church used to bring challenges to Chin churches in the US.

Family Expectations and the Impact of the Church's Leadership

The research study also shows that the church became the only place where people can receive any available resources for their daily need for their survival in the new land. In other words, the church becomes the only resource center that provides every available resource of ideas, training, workshops, and guidelines to help its members solve their daily struggles in the new land. Because of the new challenges having an adverse effect on the lives of these people, people began to seek the church for help and their expectation began to shift along with it, often leading the church to reevaluate its leadership understanding based on the context of the new land.

According to the general understanding of every Christian, the church should be a place of refuge and a place where people share their respective talents for the glory of

God. In other words, the church should be the place where the believers find ways to contribute the blessings they received from God on to other people, the place where all members share their vision to achieve the church's goal, extending the mission works of God. However, for most of the immigrant churches in the US, the church was also the place where people would receive basic essential resources in life for daily living, the place where people learn how to solve the challenges they are facing in their daily lives, and the place where young people learn the tradition, culture, language, and custom of their homeland. In short, for the immigrant people in the US, the church became a multipurpose learning center for both the older and the younger generations.

Moreover, we see that every Chin immigrant church in the US holds Sunday school classes every Sunday for the children, ages ranging from preschool to high school years. These classes teach, in the best way possible, and help the children live their lives as good Christians who obey their parents. As immigrant people in the US, the Chin churches use the Chin dialect as a teaching media for Sunday school children in the church. However, most of the children do not speak the Chin dialect fluently nor do they clearly understand the full context of the language and its origins, therefore resulting in the teachers having to use both English and the Chin dialect to teach the children in the church. At the same time, because of this language barrier, most parents are not able to communicate smoothly and effectively with their children because the parents speak only Chin dialect and the children are not fluent in Chin dialect. As a result, the church then becomes the only resource that can help people to solve the challenges they are facing in the families.

Because of the demand of the above challenges, the Chin churches in the US came to change their leadership strategy to meet the requests of the people in the new land. The church became the only place that nurtured people with their spiritual and world view accordingly to the new land. As a result, for immigrant pastors in the US, helping people like a case worker became an unavoidable responsibility while working as a full-time spiritual leader of the church. The lay leaders of the church also have to help the church's members to solve their daily challenges like the pastor of the church. In short, the question of how the leaders of the church fulfilled the demands of church's members will remain as a criteria or qualification of the immigrant churches in the new land, the US.

Important Findings from the Research

Based on the research findings, it is important to engage the emerging issues of the Chin immigrant church that challenges the role of the pastors and church leaders to develop their leadership methods and theories between the new cultural experiences in the new land and the old cultures from the homeland. Some leaders who are still attached to the old leadership practice of their homeland need to reevaluate their leadership style that will be applicable in accordance to the context of the new land. Specifically, the older lay leaders need to extend their horizons to see and know more about the context of the new land. At the same time, they also need to know the importance of sharing the leadership role to the young people who will be able to lead the church in more effective ways. On the other hand, power sharing among the older leaders and the younger leaders of Chin churches became a hot issue in dealing with leadership roles and practice.

Besides, allowing spaces for women in the top leadership role of the church and other secular organizations also became a great challenge for Chin immigrants in the US.

Again, the research finding also shows that most leaders, including pastors of Chin churches in the US, have little to no fellowship with other neighboring English-speaking churches in the US. This may be impossible for lay leaders, but for the pastors it is essential to have some kind of fellowship and having leadership training together with neighboring American churches for building a profound contextual leadership practice for the church. At the same time, the church needs to have more leadership training and seminars for both deacons and committee leaders of the church.

Moreover, the research sees that most parents of the Chin families in the US do not know much about the importance of parent teacher meetings, organized by the schools for finding effective ways to promote the education of the students. Most parents may not be able to attend that meeting because of language barrier, but leaders of the church need to organize a volunteer group of parents and educated youth to assist the parents who are not able to attend because of language barrier.

The research also sees that most Chin immigrant parents are not able to help their children with their homework due to numerous reasons. The major challenge is language and being illiterate in English, and some do not even know whether or not their children have homework from school. So, the church needs to organize a small volunteer group of educated young people to help those children who are unable to do so on their own, by assisting them with their homework and help them solve every challenge the children face in the schools and in the community. Organizing regular seminars or training in the church about parenting or how to take care of our children in the new land for parents,

encouraging members to have more connection or fellowship with their neighbors for having more contextual understanding on the contexts of the new land, letting the parents know more about the contexts where their children are living or schooling, and organizing training for the young people about how to prepare for their future education will best solve the challenge of most Chin immigrant churches in the US.

Moreover, as mentioned previously, we see that every immigrant church in the US has Sunday school classes on Sunday but most of the Sunday school teachers do not have enough training for Bible study methods, lesson planning, or how to teach the children or teaching methods for the children. The Chin churches use the Chin dialect as teaching media for Sunday school children in the church. However, as most of the children do not speak the Chin dialect fluently nor clearly understand Chin dialect, the teachers have to use both English and Chin dialect for teaching the children in the church. These teachers became bridge builders between the children and their parents who are not able to speak smoothly with their children because of language barrier. So, it is very important for immigrant churches to organize training for educating young people in the church as a way to prepare them to be church schoolteachers while helping their parents solve the many challenges, they are facing in each of their families and their daily living.

Biblical Reflection

There are several lenses in the Bible that can be quoted for this project. However, in this limited sub-topic, we will pick some primary lenses that are related to the project such as the leadership concept of Moses and Jethro, the selection of deacons in Acts chapter six, Jesus and the Samaritan woman, and love and compassion from the Bible.

The Leadership of Moses: Creating Spaces for Others

The leadership concept of Moses from Exodus chapter 18 is the oldest model for leadership in the biblical narratives. As a leader, Moses was consistently occupied with resolving disputes and problems of his people. He became the only judge who was able to solve all the problems and cases of the Hebrews in the wilderness. Moses acting out as a judge entailed having to listen and judging all the disputes of the Hebrews on a daily basis.

When Moses was judging every dispute of the Hebrews, Jethro, his-father-in-law, advised him to change his leadership style and appoint a committee of leaders to help him solve the daily disputes of the Hebrews. Moses accepted the advice from Jethro and appointed other leaders to settle the cases and disputes on his behalf. Moses abandoned top-down leadership practice and applied bottom-up leadership practice by creating spaces for others in the leadership role. The research shows that leaders of Chin churches in the United States have to abandon some of their leadership practices that they applied in their homeland, Chin state. Some Chin leaders in the US are bestowing the outdated leadership practice from Chin state in leading Chin churches in the US. As a matter of fact, contextual leadership is ground based leadership that accepts new ideas and advice from the ground, it consists of context that allows space for others to actively participate in the leadership role.

Wheatley wisely encourages us that, “In this rapidly changing world, an organization needs to seek information from everywhere, place and source people to

interpret it and keep the system off-balance alert to the need of change.”² It is essential for immigrant leaders in the US to collect every available resource from within and outside the organization. This leadership encourages leaders to recognize the talent and identity of the individual in the organization which will then help the organization practice the leadership practice of bottom-up leadership, rather than imposing change by a top-down hierarchy wielding rule. This means the church should be the place where leaders practice “bottom-up” leadership practice where all are allowed to participate in achieving new creativity for achieving the goal of the organization.

The Selection of Deacons in Acts Chapter Six

The selection of deacons we see in Acts chapter 6 is also associated with the leadership style of Moses and Jethro. The Apostles selected seven other men to serve the tables and care for the widows. As a result, the Apostles were able to have enough time to concentrate on the Word of God for effective spiritual leadership. That is to say, the Apostles abandoned their old leadership style by creating spaces for other people to participate in a wider array of leadership roles. As Wheatley states, “We may have time to ‘let go or abandon’ what doesn’t work and see the world anew.”³ Leaders in the new land, especially Chin leaders in the US, need to have the abilities to discover leadership practice that is suited for the Chins and abandon all the outdated leadership practice that they took from Chin state to attain effective leadership in the new land. In other words,

² Margaret J. Wheatley, *Leadership and the New Science: Discovering Order in a Chaotic World* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., 2006), 83.

³ Wheatley, 7.

there may be a hidden powerful soul from individual people in the organization that the leader needs to cultivate for the success of the organizational leadership. In this regard, the leader should have the ability to abandon leadership practice that does not particularly work in achieving effective leadership practice for the organization.

In previous times, most Chin leaders in the new land used to neglect the talents or hidden powers of the young people who grew up in the US with modern technology and different studies of the field. There are many hidden spirits within young people that leaders need to motivate and inspire in attaining the goal of the organization or the church. In other words, it is essential for Chin leaders in the US to create these spaces for all the talented young people in the leadership role of the church and the secular organization. As Bolman and Deal said, “putting the right people in the right structure of the organization”⁴ become hot issues in churches in the US in dealing with leadership issues and practices.

Jesus and the Samaritan Woman

Jesus’ engagement with the Samaritan woman broke the social and religious boundaries that blocked the relationship between the Jews and the Samaritans (John 4:4-26). Jesus bridged the gaps of all social and religious classes of the Jews and the Samaritans. This, in fact, made Jesus a great leader of his time. Likewise, contextual leadership may need to break certain restrictions that are blocked for leading people to achieve the goals of the organization. Leaders need to allow every person in the

⁴ Lee G. Bolman and Terrence E. Deal, *Reframing Organizations* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2013), 239.

organization to share their respective talents in the leadership role of the organization regardless of their skin color, religion, and social background.

Contextual leadership, on the other hand, is to reach people from every corner as Jesus aims to reach out to people who are outside the boundary or the walls of the church. The incarnation and the resurrection also show that Jesus is a great leader beyond the boundary made by people and even the natural law. Biblical discipleship means learning from Jesus and collaborating together and using the spiritual gift that God has equipped us with in meaningful ways. Contextual leadership is about paying attention to God and participating in what God is doing and opening space and reaching people beyond the wall or boundary made by people. Congregational leadership, on the other hand, came from the basic idea that the church's mission is to reach and love people who think themselves as unworthy to be loved and separated themselves from other people.

The basic idea of Christian leadership is simply to pay attention to what Jesus is already doing and participating in the mission work of God. Our participation in God's mission should be coherent with the way in which Jesus has his work. We are not to take over or do whatever comes into our minds to do. Rather, we learn to participate in Jesus' way of work in which we ultimately understand the context by looking at the way Christ went about his work.

Love and Compassion

Congregational leadership is based on the basic idea of love as we read, "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son" (John 3:16). The unconditional love of God the Father sent His only begotten Son to save the world. God the Father

showed how He loved the world through sending His only Son to the world in human form. In other words, the triune God incarnates in a human form to show His love (*agape*) to the world regardless of human sins, color, and race.

In the book of Jeremiah, we read, “The Lord appeared from afar saying, ‘I have loved you with an everlasting love. I have drawn you with unfailing kindness’” (Jeremiah 31:3). Hosea also writes about the love of God, “I led them with cords of a human kindness with ties of love. To them I was like one who lifts a little child to the cheek, and I bent down and fed them” (Hosea 11:4). Contextual missional leadership is leading people not by force nor power but solely by love, the love (*agape*) that is based on the triune God. David Bosch also writes, “Mission is an activity of the triune God and there is mission because God loves people.”⁵

Contextual leadership is not only about leading people who love us but also about loving people as they are. Rather, it is about loving even our enemy by the love (*agape*) of God. Jesus reminds us in Matthew 5:46 that, “If you love those who love you, what rewards will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that.?” Contextual leadership engages the congregation to discern God’s love that already exists in the community outside the church. According to Roxburgh, “If you want to discover and discern what God is up in the world, enter the neighborhoods and communities where you live. Sit at the table of the others, and there you may begin to hear what God is doing there.”⁶ The apostle Paul also engaged people who were outside the Christian faith. He went into their

⁵ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission* (Mary Knoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2016), 402.

⁶ Alan J. Roxburgh, *Missional: Joining God in the Neighborhood* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 134.

temples, cities, theaters, and other public arenas to listen and engage them that the “unknown god” is the true God whom he is proclaiming to the world (Acts 17:23).

Contextual leadership is about compassion, caring for those who need help both within and outside of the organization. Matthew writes how Jesus’ compassion moved him to serve the hungry people: “When Jesus saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd” (Matthew 9: 35-36). It is the suffering of the Father who is giving up his own Son (Rome 8:32). Jürgen Moltmann also writes of God's passionate suffering that “God made our suffering as his own.”⁷ Contextual leadership engages people to have deep passion for others and dare to suffer for other people they are leading.

Theological Reflection

The researcher used four theological lenses for exploring effective contextual leadership for this research. The lenses are, contextual theology, the sending and social trinity, liberation, and authority.

Contextual Theology

Stephen B. Bevans defines contextual theology as “an attempt to understand Christian faith in terms of a particular context” and becomes a meaningful theological imperative for us.⁸ Contextual theology seeks to understand the nature of theology in a new way. Again, Bevans also states that “Every authentic theology has been very much

⁷ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 24.

⁸ Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2003), 3.

rooted in a particular context.”⁹ However, that authentic theology, rooted in a particular context or time, may not be authentic for a different person with a different context. Contextual theology is a theology that contextualizes that authentic theology rooted in its old own context into the new context with different people.

Besides, Bevans states, “to be Christian, means to be faithful to the Christian Tradition. But that had fidelity given the plurality of the tradition has to be a creative one or contextualized one.” This also means for Bevans that theologians should distinguish tradition from traditionalism and strive to transform tradition into a new context.¹⁰ The Chin people in the US, who came from Burma, also had their own old tradition of their home land, that should be contextualized accordingly to the context of the new land, the United States.

Besides, Bevans argues that theology should not be simply seen as an intellectual understanding but intelligent action or response, engaging in the act of doing theology as a conversation.¹¹ Most of the Chin people in the US have no fellowship or conversation with their neighboring English-speaking churches or people due to the cultural differences and language barriers. As a result, like Bevans argues, they will not be able to cultivate contextualization without conversing with the neighboring people of the new land.

⁹ Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, 7.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 69.

¹¹ Bevans, 69.

The Sending and Social Trinity

The theme of God sending Jesus on a special mission occurs in the four gospels in various ways. The affirmation is made in the direct statements (John 8:42; 11:42) and indirectly through Jesus' references to his Father as the one who sent him (5:24, 30). The sending does not stop with Jesus. Both the Father and the Son send the Paraclete (14:26; 15:26). Additionally, Jesus sends the disciples (13:20a) who, along with the Paraclete, continue the mission just as John the Baptist was sent to inaugurate it (3:28). This threefold sending of John the Baptist, Jesus, and the disciples-Paraclete serves to incorporate "sending" into the flow of the gospel and to highlight its importance.

Moreover, the act of sending includes a special commission of the task to establish God's kingdom as a religious nature in the world. As John the Baptist is sent to bear witness to the true light (1:6-7), Jesus also is sent to bear witness to the true light (1:6-7), and the disciples and Paraclete are sent to perform tasks that continue the mission of Jesus (17:18; 15:26). These missions are often related to the revelation of the sender (3:34; 8:26) and the redemption of the ones to whom the agent is sent (3:17). Sometimes a dualistic view of the world serves as the context and makes the sending significant (10:36; 17:18a).

This "sending" is related to the idea that the God above is related to the world below through Christ as the one sent. Here, we see that "sending" symbolizes the doctrine of revelation. The revelation in Christ is expressed in terms of *logos*, "word" (1:14). "The word became flesh" (John 1:1). The triune God incarnates as the Son of man Jesus. Moltmann states, "The incarnation of the Son God himself fulfills the promise made to

human kind and people become co-opted sons and daughters of the Father.”¹² Through the incarnation, the Son and trinitarian relationship of the Son, the Father, and the Holy Spirit, people in the world simultaneously exist “in God” and “God in them.”

One important aspect of trinitarian relationships to the world is to engage people to live as children of God and building relationships through communication, conversing with one another. In this conversation process, all are regarded as equal for the organization, social settings and even the marginalized people can have equal voice in relation for building a fair and just society. This conversation also leads the team to unity that is constituted by mutual indwelling and reciprocal interpretation of the Holy Trinity. In this conversation, the indwelling Spirit of individual people leads the organization as the place where all people are treated equally for building a just society in the world.

Liberation

Liberation theology developed as a result of a systematic, disciplined reflection on Christian faith and its implications. It is worth noting that the theologians who formulated liberation theology mostly do not teach in the so-called universities and seminaries. They are leaders who have direct contact with the grass-roots groups as advisors to priests, sisters, or pastors and the questions they deal with arise out of their direct contact with the poor based on the context. Liberation theology interprets the Bible and the key Christian doctrines through the experiences of the poor. It also helps the poor to interpret their own faith in a new way. It deals with Jesus' life and message. Jesus let them . . . see

¹² Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 121.

the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead raised and the Gospel is preached to the poor (Luke 7:22).

According to Phillip Berryman, liberation theology is, “an interpretation of Christian faith out of the suffering, struggle, and hope of the poor, a critique of society and the ideologies sustaining it and a critique of the activity of the church and of Christians from the angle of the poor.”¹³ The Church has the duty to proclaim the liberation of human beings who are her own children and interrelated to evangelization. Liberation must be inserted into the entire contemporary reality of human life and is a faith reality, one of the basic biblical themes, deeply inscribed in the salvific mission of Christ, in the work of redemption, and in his teaching.

The main purpose of congregational leadership, on the other hand, is to establish a just and fair society in the whole world. Besides, liberation theology is not only for liberating people from enslavement but also for liberating people from self-psychological enslavement, people who have inferiority complex and thinking themselves as inferior in every aspect of life in comparison with other people. This is the reason why many Chins in the US have psychological depression in their lives. Leaders have great responsibilities to find the best strategy to solve their psychological depression and their inferiority complex. Therefore, contextual leadership should explore the contemporary reality of human life for building a fair and just society where people regarded themselves as equal to others.

¹³ Phillip Berryman, *Liberation Theology: Essential Facts About the Revolutionary Movement in Latin America and Beyond* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1987), 156.

Authority

Congregation leadership should exercise their authority according to the context of the people they are leading. It is important to ask, “how are decisions made about doctrine and practice in the church based on the context of the people? In the early pioneer context of the church, who decides?” Theoretically, the answer is local believers because the authority originally came out from the people. As a matter of fact, the authority or power came out from the ground people of congregations.

It is important for congregational leaders to recognize how the pioneer acknowledged the power of the Holy Spirit that is revealed in the Bible for getting things done miraculously in their daily lives. Likewise, contextual leadership on the other hand, is based on the theological concept of “priesthood of all believers.” The local autonomy and the right and responsibility of every single person is highly recognized, but Scripture becomes the final authority for faith and practice in the church. Thomas G. Bandy also asserts that “All concepts and plans must be measured in reference to Scriptures, the practice of the early church, sound analysis, and openness to the fresh existence of the Holy Spirit.”¹⁴

Regarding the basic idea of authority, many leaders of the Chin in the US think that they have higher authority when they become top leaders of the church or organization. In other words, people used to think that authority came with a leadership role. Nevertheless, leadership came from the ground people of the church or organization.

¹⁴ Thomas G. Bandy, *Spirited Leadership: Empowering People to Do What Matters* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2007), 54.

Therefore, congregational leaders should need to know that leadership roles are not for authority but primarily for more responsibilities for leading the organization or church to achieve its goal.

Theoretical Reflection

There are three theoretical lenses for examining the research. They consist of *adaptive leadership*, *interpretive leadership*, and *missional leadership*. In general, these three lenses will help leaders understand the current cultural context of Chin churches in the US and examine theories about how the social and cultural context of the US influences Chin churches in the US. This will help applied leaders take more focus on contextual leadership that is based on the context of the people they are leading in the new land.

Adaptive Leadership

Adaptive leadership includes technical and adaptive challenges in relation to leadership strategy. In short, in terms of technical challenges, the system had required knowledge and skills that needed to be applied by people. Adaptive challenges, on the other hand, require people to have some kind of new learning, new discoveries, and adjustments in the entire organization. Again, adaptive leadership calls for a leader to be both “active and reflective” which means a leader has to have the ability to “alternative and between participating and observing.”¹⁵ In adaptive leadership, there may be a time

¹⁵ Ronald A. Heifetz, *Leadership without Easy Answers* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 1994), 36.

when leaders need to observe the activities of the organization as an observer in order to find some discoveries within the organization.

Chin churches in America are facing some challenges to differentiate between technical and adaptive challenges in the leadership role of the congregation. To be honest, there may be some leaders who never heard the term “adaptive leadership” among the congregational leaders of the Chin. That is why it is vital for leaders of the Chin in the US to have some kind of profound understanding on the meaning of adaptive leadership in the new land.

Using the lens of adaptive leadership, we see that leaders of the Chin need to have some kind of leadership training to receive new knowledge and strategies for their future leadership in the church. As a result, they may be able to ask themselves how to apply this lens to identify what is going on among their members and in their communities. How have they addressed the leadership challenges within their new social and cultural context that call for adaptive changes? How have they dealt with the social and cultural factors that have brought conflicts among their members, especially among the young people? The lens of adaptive leadership theory will help Chin leaders to discover together how to apply adaptive leadership theory for church’s leadership, to address the social and cultural context that calls for adaptive change in the new land.

Interpretive Leadership

As Scott Cormode states, “Christian leadership is basically an act of theological interpretation, helping other people to interpret spiritual meaning for their own

theological meaning.”¹⁶ Similarly, the main purpose of contextual leadership is to help others to understand spiritual meaning according to the context in which they live. In other words, it is the basic idea of interpretive leadership that leaders encourage people to read the Bible and let them interpret themselves by the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

However, in the Chin society, pastors are regarded as the only resourceful person(s) who are qualified to interpret theological meaning for others. The pastors also came to regard themselves as the only responsible person for interpreting theological meaning for their members. According to facts, it is nearly impossible for a pastor to interpret theological meaning for every single member where there are approximately 300 to 400 members in the congregation. For example, we see that two of Chin churches in the US are composed of 1800 to 2000 members but they have only two to three pastors to lead the members. Therefore, it is necessary for Chin pastors to encourage people to read the Bible and let them interpret it without a coach but by the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Moreover, it is important to know that interpretive leadership encourages people to listen seriously to the voice of the Holy Spirit when they are doing theological interpretation that will lead them to maintain the Biblical narrative. Similarly, as all Christians unanimously accept “priesthood of all believers,” every believer has the right to direct contact with Almighty God that leads them to interpret their own theological

¹⁶ Scott Cormode, *Making Spiritual Sense: Christian Leaders as Spiritual Interpreters* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2006), xi.

meaning for themselves. In other words, believers are the people in whom the Holy Spirit lives again in their life that leads them to interpret theological meaning for their life.

Missional Leadership

In order to understand the meaning of missional leadership, we, as the congregational leaders, need to understand the core meaning of the term “mission” first. Lesslie Newbigin defined the term mission as *missio Dei* meaning the “Mission of God” meaning “mission is not merely the activities of the church, rather, mission is fundamentally the result of God’s initiative.”¹⁷ Similarly, David Bosch defines mission as “being derived from the very nature of God, an invisible involvement or action of the Trinitarian movement of mission in which, “Father, Son and Holy Spirit sending the church into the world.”¹⁸ The implication of the Trinitarian understanding of missional church is that the Trinity exists in a relational community and the leadership of the missional church is called to reflect the nature of the triune God and live as a relational community. A missional leader is a leader who has profound understanding on the nature of mission and the meaning of missional leadership.

However, we see that many Christians, especially the Chins, still understand mission as the work of the church not as the work of God. Besides, the term “missional” also becomes the new term that is a very unfamiliar term for most congregational leaders of the church. Again, for most Chin churches, mission means sending someone into

¹⁷ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Open Secret: An Introduction in the Theology of Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: WM. B. Eerdmans, 1995), 137.

¹⁸ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 399.

remote places where the Gospel is not heard or donating for that purpose. Furthermore, most Chin churches are still thinking of missions as an optional one that the church has the right to do or not. As a matter of fact, based on its core meaning, mission is not an option, rather it is a command that every church including every believer is commanded to do or participate in the mission of God.

Moreover, it is very important for church leaders to have a profound understanding of the meaning of the term “missional leadership” so that they may be able to convince others to participate in the mission of God. In other words, it is essential to understand that missional leadership includes sharing, self-sacrifice, humiliation, self-emptying, communication, love, fellowship, and care for creation. The smallest thing we do for and shares our lives to others in the name of God includes participating in the mission of God. The internal life of the missional church focuses on every believer living as a disciple of God and engaging in missional leadership.

The Limitations of the Research

As in any other research, this research also has its own limitations. First, this research selected one Chin immigrant congregation for a research site with two types of interviews (individual pastors and lay leaders, focus groups), and electronic mail interview with pastors from different Chin immigrant congregations under Chin Baptist Churches of United States of America (CBC USA). The researcher did personal interviews with five leaders (two pastors and three lay leaders) from the research site. The researcher met twice with each interviewee and took about one hour for each meeting. The researcher also conducted the focus group with twelve participants from leaders of the research site and electronic mail survey with nine pastors from different

Chin immigrant congregations in the US. The researcher conducted focus that met twice in person for one hour each meeting and for a final meeting that was conducted via virtual zoom for two hours due to coronavirus outbreak in 2020. There was a total of twenty-four participants in this research.

Secondly, the researcher conducted the research in Chin dialect, which needs double transcription. The researcher had to do the translation from Chin to English before transcribing the data for analysis. This process might have disrupted the research work, which may have affected the quality of the data analysis. There might also be some important data that the researcher could not translate accurately in English. In order to avoid inaccuracy of translating important data from the research, the researcher consulted the research assistant who is an expert in both languages.

Thirdly, the researcher utilized empirical qualitative method, which was very helpful for finding the lived experience of the interviewees in a more personal and in-depth way. One of the primary goals of a qualitative method is to let the interviewees speak for themselves avoiding the researcher's presupposition and interruption. It allows the interviewees to express their own stories and describe who they are. This method of research is a promising way to uncover the real life of the interviewees in the real world. However, it takes time to reach this level, and a researcher needs to spend enough time with the participants in order to get an in-depth reality. The researcher also had a limited time to observe the family system, immigration process, culture, and decision-making process of the participants in this research.

Fourthly, the researcher first intended to conclude the research by conducting a seminar with all the researchers and all deacons of the research site after the second focus

group was conducted for the research. But the researcher concluded the research by conducting a focus group virtual zoom meeting because of corona virus spark and limited time frame. This research could have better represented if other immigrant congregations were included in this research. The result could have been stronger and more reliable if more personal interviews and seminars were included in this research.

Questions for Further Research

This study is the first step to explore practical contextual leadership for Chin immigrant churches in the US. As immigrant people in the new land with the new context, they are facing countless challenges in the congregations and leadership became most challenging. I am also interested in leadership since my childhood that led me to do further study on leadership at Luther Seminary. However, after doing my research project, I came to see many possibilities to study in the future based on themes emerging from the research.

One possibility for future research might be exploring the challenges that every family is facing in their daily life. I learnt from this project that the Chin immigrant families are facing countless challenges in their families beyond our imagination. Especially, they are facing great challenges to take care of their children in the new land. As stated before, parents cannot talk with their children because of language barriers. For example, in most families, parents speak only Chin dialect but children do not speak Chin dialect. I would be interested in observing how the Chin churches in the US are finding possible solutions for solving the challenges that current families are facing in the family.

I hope that the result of this research will help the churches to prepare for solving this challenge among immigrant families. Another possible study will be interviewing or observing among other immigrants from East and Southeast Asia like Korea, Philippines, Vietnam, etc. This approach will help us to see and learn from the different or similar problems they have been facing and how they have been struggling to rebuild new identities in the US. A comparison with other immigrant Asian groups will be instructive and very valuable for the Chins in the US.

I will also be interested in analyzing the role of culture in its relation to church leadership theories and methods. It is important to carefully examine the theories and methods developed under western culture. We need to test them in light of our particular culture. This approach will pay attention to cultural changes such as the role of genders, family marriage systems, and community values. For example, the church accepts the participation of women in leadership roles in principle but there was no deaconess in the whole Chin churches under CBC USA when this research was done in 2020. This research will attempt to redefine the practice of church leadership among the Chin churches in the US.

Finally, I have interest in organizing a group of research teams in relation to the long-time survival or existence of Chin churches for the future in the new land. There are more than 110 Chin churches across the US in 2020. However, only about 20-25 are well-established churches with full-time pastors and church buildings while the rest are struggling to be a well-established churches in the new land. They all have countless challenges in their daily lives but no one to help them solve their problems. So, the

research team will explore the common challenges Chin people facing in the US and they will find possible solutions for those challenges.

Summary

This concluding chapter engages mainly with the summary of the emerging exploratory research theory and the important findings from the research. The research question is, “*How might contextual leadership develop within Chin immigrant churches in the United States?*” Based on the research question, this researcher explores the current leadership formation and practices of Chin immigrant congregations in the US, focusing on how they can develop their leadership practice according to the new context of the new land.. Therefore, this research attempts to answer the question: How to explore effective contextual leadership for Chin churches in their formation of ethnic congregations in the US? The initial motivation for this research arose out of the researcher’s interest in the perception of Chin immigrant congregations on the issue of leadership practice. The research results indicate that the leadership practice emerging from the Chin immigrant congregations are growing rapidly and are in the process of struggling, forming, and developing their leadership practice and ecclesiological identities in the new land. The emerging theory is that the Chin immigrant churches are preparing to become more theologically sound and biblically informed congregations by addressing the adaptive challenges they are facing in the new land. Finally, it is the researcher’s intention that the findings from this research may be somewhat useful for leaders of Chin churches in the US and some researchers who are doing further research in the field of congregational leadership among Chin immigrants in the US.

EPILOGUE

It was my dream to have further theological study in the US since I finished M.Div. from Myanmar Institute of Theology in March 2005. But I became a full-time pastor of Lai Baptist Church, Mandalay, Myanmar in May 2005. I nearly came to forget my dream of studying in the US after serving as pastor in the church for more than ten years. However, God gave me a golden chance to restart my journey to Luther Seminary in the summer of 2017. I came to the US on a six month visit visa to attend the mission consultation of Chin Baptist Churches of the United States of America (CBC USA) in 2016. I visited many Chin churches in the US after the mission conference. At the time of my visit, among the many Chins in the US, Dr. Pum Za Mang, my old classmate of B.Th. and M.Div., and my best friend who was studying for a PhD in Luther Seminary, advised me to apply for the DMin program at Luther Seminary. Without having a second thought, I submitted my application form and got admission in the program.

I always had a passion to study leadership since I was studying B.Th. and M.Div. My dream and passion became true when I came to Luther Seminary to study Congregational Mission and Leadership. I started out my first year with a course on “Pastoral Identity and Spiritual Life” with Prof. Dwight Zscheile and Michael Binder, who taught us the identity of a pastor which is inseparable from the spiritual life who should be a spiritual mentor for members of the church. They assigned us to read some books about the work of the Holy Spirit that helped me understand more about the

creative power of the Holy Spirit in our life. The course helped me understand the predominant nature of the Holy Spirit in the life of the congregation. This course challenged me to reconsider the following questions, “Do we, as pastors of the church, think that we can make reconciliation without the help of the Holy Spirit within and outside the church.” Besides, “Do our sermons and preaching from the pulpit heal the wounds of the people and reconcile, oppose, and correct the unjust structure of our world and bring about the good news of God’s salvation?”

The second course we learned from Prof. David Hahn, “Missional Church” developed my understanding of church and congregation in relation to the mission of the triune God in and to all creation. The core idea of the Christian mission of *missio Dei* “the mission of God” is not the mission of the church, gave me new insight for convincing others about the nature of a missional church. The trinitarian concept we learned from this course also extended my understanding of the mission work of the triune God and my trinitarian understanding as well. The literature we read for the course led me to critically think about the terminology we used for God in relation to the triune God. The patriarchal sexist usage that condemns and oppresses women in the early church such as; Father Son and Holy Spirit are proper names for Trinity in this 21st century. We need to reconsider using the alternate terms such as Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, for these three names are intimately involved in the works of Creation, Redemption, and Sanctification works of God. Moreover, Trinity is best seen in the cross of Jesus, the form of the crucified is the Trinity, the redemption work done by God for us, opens hopes for the future and a new way of prayer for the believers,

The third course we learned was “Missional Leadership” with Prof. Terri Elton and Prof. Steven Thomason. This course helped me more understand the meaning of missional leadership in relation to contextual congregational leadership. The literature of the social science we read for the course helped me to understand how to lead the organization with the leadership style of “bottom up” leadership that allows all people to participate to achieve new creativity for the development of the organization. The practical qualitative research method introduced in the course also helped me understand how to conduct an open-ended interview for different kinds of research. The practical research we learned from this course became very helpful both for my thesis project and my practical pastoral leadership.

The courses I learned through the professors of Luther Seminary and the practical study we conducted for this course deeply helped me understand the importance of integrating different fields and bringing them into the life and ministry of a congregation. Finally, Luther Seminary has taught me to become a better scholar and a well-prepared leader for God’s mission in the world.

APPENDIX A: LETTER TO PASTOR

Dear Pastor _____

My name is Bawi Bik Thawng. I am a DMIN student at Luther Seminary, St. Paul, MN, working on a research project, "*Contextual Leadership within Chin Immigrant Churches of America.*" I am interested in your church to be one of my research participants, and I will be very grateful if you are willing to participate in this project and help me organize interview focus group and seminar based on leaders of your congregation.

My primary research question is this: *How might Action Research interventions develop contextual leadership within Chin immigrant churches of America?* My research interview has two main aspects reflecting the above research question: (1) conducting qualitative in-depth interviews with pastor(s), lay leaders of the church and (2) conducting focus group interviews and one seminar.

Hoping that you will decide to be a part of my research project, I seek your assistance in soliciting and arranging the following for interviews.

1. Interviews with one or two pastors (approximately an hour in length)
2. Interviews with two focus groups from leaders of the congregation (approximately an hour and a half in length)
4. Allow me and help me organize a seminar for leaders of your congregation
5. Allow me to observe congregation's occasional activities in an effort to learn more about the leadership of the congregation.

Enclosed is an Informed Consent form that needs to be given to all participants in this research and signed at the time of the interview. To protect privacy, real names will not be used.

In Christ's Service,

Bawi Bik Thawng

APPENDIX B: FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

1. What led you to participate in this focus groups or seminar gathering?
2. Have you ever heard about contextual leadership before?
3. What kind of leadership practices does the church is practicing according to your understanding?
4. How will you help church's pastors to apply contextual leadership for the church?
5. What are the challenges for applying contextual leadership in the church?
6. Did you receive any guidelines from the church leaders for leading your family and children according to the context of the land?
7. What role does the Holy Spirit play in the church's activities and tell me about a time when you sense the activities of the Holy Spirit in the church's leadership?

APPENDIX C: ELECTRONIC MAIL SURVEY QUESTIONS

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will not be disclosed.

Your Initials _____ Your birth date: __ / __ / ____ (mm/dd/yyyy)

(Your initials and birthdate are for computer analysis only and not for identification. All information will be confidential.)

1. What is your gender?
 - Male
 - Female
 - Not prefer to say
2. How long you have been as a pastor of your recent church in America?
3. How long you have been in the US?
4. Did you become pastor after arriving the US?
 - If yes, when
 - If no, from where and when
5. What is your position or role in the church?
6. How often does your church had leadership training for leaders of the church in the past three years?
7. What kind of leadership training would advance your church?
8. Did you have any experience in attending leadership training organized by native American in the US.
9. How do you see women involvement in the leadership role of the church?
10. How had the leadership style of Myanmar influenced the leadership role of your church?
11. How has being in the USA affected your leadership?
12. Is there anything that you would like to add or share?

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will not be disclosed.

1. What is your gender?
 - Male
 - Female
 - Prefer not to say
2. How long have you been in the US?
3. How long had you been as a member of the church?
4. What leadership role or position had you had in your church?
5. How would you describe the current leadership of this church?
6. What is your understanding of mission, and how would you relate mission with the leadership of the church?
7. What are the key roles of the pastors in this church? What are the key things the pastors do?
8. What other things do you wish they would do?
9. What are the leadership challenges that call for adaptive experiments in your congregation?
10. As a leader, do you think you need to adapt to the social and cultural context where you now live? If so, in what way? If not, why?
11. What are the things you have done in this church differently than you would have done in Myanmar? What are some important things you work hard to maintain the same as in Myanmar?
12. Do you think the pastors of this church understand the challenges members feel in adapting to a new social and cultural context? If so, in what way? If not, why? Please give me one or two examples.

13. How often does your church had leadership training for the leaders of the church in the past three years?
14. Had you have participated in those training?
15. How had the leadership style of Myanmar influenced the leadership style of your church?
16. How life in the US has influenced the church?
17. Do your church had any family leadership training or seminar for the members in the past?
18. Do you see any deaconess in the Chin churches of America?
19. Would you like to see more women in leadership role of the church?
20. Do you think that women should be elected for deaconess in the church?
21. Is anything that you would like to add or share? (If yes, please describe)

APPENDIX E: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Contextual Leadership Within Chin Immigrant Churches of America

You are invited to be in a research study of cultivating contextual leadership regarding congregational leadership and management. You were selected as a possible participant because you participated in a recent congregational conversation event. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by me as part of my D. Min's thesis project in Congregational Mission and Leadership at Luther Seminary.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to cultivate the effective contextual congregational leadership on our congregation's participation in ministry, both within and outside the church.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, we would ask you participate in a focus group discussion about your experience of the congregational event, and the impact that event has had on your faith. The discussion will last no longer than 90 minutes.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

There are no special risks involved by being a part of this study, aside from normal life risks.

There are no direct benefits of participating in this research.

Indirect benefits to yourself/or the general public of participation are improved understanding of the mission and vision of Dallas Chin Baptist Church, contribution to future programs or leadership, and strengthening of the church's leadership and life.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept confidential. If I publish any type of the findings, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. All data will be kept in a locked file in the researcher's computer; only my advisors, Daniel Anderson, Alvin Luedke, and I will have access to the data. If the research is terminated for any reason, all data and recordings will be destroyed.

The researcher will also make tape recordings as well as videotapes in this research. As mentioned above, only my advisors and I will have access to these tape recordings. These tape recordings will be used for educational purposes only, and they will be erased three years after the researcher graduated.

While I will make every effort to ensure confidentiality, anonymity cannot be guaranteed. If you are interviewed or otherwise participate as an individual or a member of a focus group as a part of this study, you agree to keep statements or other information received from others as a result of your participation strictly confidential.

Indicate one of the following:

a. Raw data will be destroyed by June 1, 2024 (Federal guidelines specify a minimum of 3 years for retention of data)

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Luther Seminary and/ or with Dallas Chin Baptist Church. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Bawi Bik Thawng. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact me via email.

You may also contact my advisors, Dr. Daniel Anderson and Dr. Alvin Luedke.

You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information or have had it read to me. I have received answers to questions asked. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature _____ Date _____

Signature of investigator _____ Date _____

I consent to be audiotaped (or videotaped):

Signature _____ Date _____

I consent to allow use of my direct quotations in the published thesis document.

Signature _____ Date _____

APPENDIX F: IMPLIED CONSENT LETTER FOR SURVEY

November 1, 2019

Dear,

You are invited to participate in a study of cultivating contextual leadership with Chin immigrant Churches of America. I hope to learn more about contextual leadership that will be more suitable and effective for leading the church under God's leadership. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are active leaders of Dallas Chin Baptist.

If you decide to participate, please complete the enclosed survey. The survey is designed to cultivate contextual leadership based on the context we are living in. It will take about 30 minutes to complete. No benefits accrue to you for answering the survey, but your responses will be used to inform my research of your congregation. Any discomfort or inconvenience to you derives only from the amount of time taken to complete the survey.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will not be disclosed.

Your decision whether or not to participate will not prejudice your future relationships with me, and or with Dallas Chin Baptist Church or Luther Seminary. If you decide to participate, you are free to discontinue participation at any time without prejudice.

If you have any questions, please ask. If you have additional questions later, contact me.

You may also contact my advisors, Dr. Daniel Anderson and Dr. Alvin Luedke.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Bawi Bik Thawng

APPENDIX G: IMPLIED CONSENT LETTER FOR EMAIL SURVEY

November 1, 2019

Dear,

You are invited to participate in a study of cultivating contextual leadership within Chin immigrant Churches of America. I hope to learn more about contextual leadership that will be more suitable and effective for leading the church under God's leadership. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are active young leader and devoted pastor among Chin Baptist Churches USA.

If you decide to participate, please complete the email survey. The survey is designed to cultivate contextual leadership based on the context we are living in. It will take about 30 minutes to complete. No benefits accrue to you for answering the survey, but your responses will be used to inform my research of the congregation. Any discomfort or inconvenience to you derives only from the amount of time taken to complete the survey.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will not be disclosed.

Your decision whether or not to participate will not prejudice your future relationships with me, and or with Dallas Chin Baptist Church or Luther Seminary. If you decide to participate, you are free to discontinue participation at any time without prejudice.

If you have any questions, please ask. If you have additional questions later, contact me via email.

You may also contact my advisors, Dr. Daniel Anderson and Dr. Alvin Luedke.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Bawi Bik Thawng

APPENDIX H: PASTOR'S INTERVIEW LETTER

Dear Pastor _____,

Thank you for being willing to participate in my research project. I will meet you at _____ on _____. The interview will last approximately one hour.

For your convenience, I have listed the general questions of the interview. Please see attached file/letter.

I also enclose an Inform Consent Form, which you will need to sign at the time of the interview. Please read this through before we meet. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me before our meeting. Again, thank you for your help.

In Christ's service,

Bawi Bik Thawng

APPENDIX I: FOCUS GROUPS INTERVIEW LETTER

Dear _____

Thank you for being willing to participate in my research project. I will meet you at _____ on _____. The interview will last approximately one hour.

For your convenience, I have listed the general questions of the interview. Please see attached file/letter.

I also enclose an Inform Consent Form, which you will need to sign at the time of the interview. Please read this through before we meet. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me before our meeting. Again, thank you for your help.

In Christ's service,

Bawi Bik Thawng

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